

LAWRENCE PARK TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
September 13, 2023

6:00 p.m.

4230 Iroquois Avenue

In Attendance: Commissioner J. Golden, Commissioner T. Benovic, Commissioner B. Rodemaker, Commissioner S. Trojak, Commissioner J. Moffett, Police Chief J. Morell, Solicitor A. Schmidt, Engineer D. Harrington, Secretary C. Cunningham, ~Commissioner Golden called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was performed~

Commissioner Golden gave the floor to Mr. John Kraus from Allegheny Financial who presented the Board with the financial reports for Uniformed and Non-Uniformed pension plans. The economy is in better shape than 2022. The plans are up at least 6 %, with both plans heading in an upward trend which is projected to remain that way through the rest of 2023 and the first half of 2023. Kraus recommends to keep the plans as they are.

Public Meeting Regarding Transfer of Liquor License:

Attorney Michael Micsky spoke to the Board and Public regarding the transfer of a liquor license from the city of Erie to Lawrence Park. Sonny and Rose Nouri are the owners of Erie Gas and would like to transfer their license so they could sell beer and wine like other places selling such items. There will be seating and food to purchase as required by PA state law. Residents were asked if they had any comments regarding the application. Melissa Weismiller stated that she thought that you could not sell alcohol within so many feet of a school. Attorney Micsky said there is no blanket prohibition regarding the sale of alcohol and footage near a school. Attorney Micsky also stated that this is only the first step in the process, which is to get the Board's approval to proceed. Rose Nouri (owner of the gas station) said that she and her husband Sonny are here for the community and have been in good standing with the Community. Nouri said that they have had numerous checks from the Cigarette and Tobacco industry and have never have failed a "check" and have never sold to underage children. Attorney Micsky did also point out that the PA State Police as well as LPPD are directly across the street from Erie Gas. There were no further questions from the public and a motion was made by Commissioner Rodemaker to close the public hearing; Commissioner Moffett seconded and the meeting closed.

~ Commissioner Trojak motioned to re-open the BOC meeting; Commissioner Rodemaker seconded; the motion passed~

REPORTS:

Engineers Report:

Soudan Lift Station Replacement Status:

- PA DEP WQM Permit – permit received 9/12/2023
- USDA – Ongoing coordination to address USDA review comments.

Penn DOT Bureau of Public Transportation – Lawrence Park Township and Wesleyville Transit and Multimodal Feasibility Study:

- Bridge inspections completed August 24-25.
- Bridge Inspection report is being DRAFTED for PennDOT. Will update Township when completed.
- Concept plans and stakeholder meetings to follow.

Cunningham Lift Station Griner – DCED Grant Application Coordination

- No change in status. Still under review by DCED. Decisions likely by September.

Solicitors Report:

- We have continued to search for a valid address at which to serve Robert Hiegel, Jr. about the code enforcement complaint for 438 Harvey Ave. Once we know we can make good service, we will file the Complaint.
- We have reviewed and finalized the proposed Short Term Rental Ordinance, which the Commissioners will vote to advertise tonight.
- We have worked on various personnel matters.
- We have worked with the Township to advise on various matters regarding a pending application to transfer a liquor license into the Township.

~Commissioner Moffett made a motion to approve all reports as presented. Commissioner Rodemaker seconded the motion; the motion carried~

Visitors: Tom Buchleitner, Rose Nouri, Dale Durst, Charles Curtis, Dale Williams, Eric Fin, Bill Dunbar, Karen Barringer, Melissa Weismiller, Chris Buchleitner, Sonny Nouri, Michael Micsky, Mark Riggle

Signed in to speak: Tom Buchleitner, Rose Nouri, Dale Williams, Sonny Nouri, Michael Micsky

~ Tom Buchleitner stated that he understands that the budget is being overspent with the projected number of \$217,000 and he said there are specific things that need to be looked at in his experience of budgeting. Is there really money to be hiring another employee whether it be a maintenance person or a police officer. And he certainly has great respect for police officers. In dire consequences a hiring freeze should be in place along with beautification projects or building projects. Buchleitner stated that maybe the Board should figure out how to get out of the debt hole before going forward. Commissioner Rodemaker stated that as of today we are \$163,000 over the budget for the year. Rodemaker said this is concerning as taxes were significantly raised last year and this year taxes will have to be raised to fill that hole and to continue to supply services to the residents. Commissioner Golden stated that budget meetings will begin next Tuesday and each department will be looked at very closely. Golden said that there are two SRO officers and the school district pays for 1 and ½ of those officers. With those officers being at the school during the daytime hours the PD has had to pay overtime for other officers to fill that time to provide 24/7 security to the residents. Golden said that our utility fees have gone up significantly as well as unforeseen repairs to buildings that needed to be done. As far as the taxes we have been informed by the DCED that taxes must be raised every year due to rising costs of everything. Golden encouraged residents to attend those budget meetings. Golden stated that Lawrence Park is a 1.8 square mile community. Buchleitner said since our community is only 1.8 square miles the police support is large; he asked if there has been a study to see if this amount of security is needed. He said he is not being the bad guy or picking on the police, it is looking at everything; beautification projects instead of patching pot holes. Commissioner Golden stated that the mulch was from trees taken down in the township and the kids from the schools helped spread the mulch. Golden also stated that he did a spread sheet regarding schedules with how many hours of coverage we have for the entire month including the SRO's. Commissioner Trojak said that LP taxes are all lumped together and other townships break out different fees into their taxes. Commissioner Golden reiterated that less than 25% of your tax bill is given to the township. Buchleitner asked what happened to get us to this point of such a deep hole. Commissioner Moffet stated that there were some legal fees that were not foreseen, unwanted expenses over \$18,000. Moffet also said that a large expense is the HVAC loan that was incurred before all these Board members were seated. Golden also said that all the Board members are committed to the residents of Lawrence Park. Golden stated that he has not taken payment for being an LP Commissioner this year and has also donated various cleaning supplies to the township. Golden also said that there was a lot of negligence from previous commissioners and there was not a lot of prevention; we are dealing with decaying lift stations, road repair, dead trees, etc. because the past boards turned a blind eye to all these needs.

~Dale Williams spoke to the Board regarding issues at the boat ramp this summer. There have been numerous incidents during the summer with students messing around the boat ramp at night. There also was an altercation with a number of students against Dale and another resident in which the students threatened them. Williams would like the police to be aware of incidents going on very often down there. ~

~Sonny Nouri asked if a gate can be installed at the boat launch to keep people from going down there after hours~

Bills:

- Commissioner Trojak made a motion to pay bills as presented, Commissioner Rodemaker seconded the motion; the motion carried.

Minutes:

- Commissioner Rodemaker made a motion to approve BOC Minutes from August 9, 2023, Commissioner Trojak seconded the motion; the motion carried.

Old Business: N/A

New Business:

- Commissioner Rodemaker motioned to advertise the 2023 Budget meetings; Commissioner Moffett seconded the motion; the motion carried.
- Commissioner Trojak motioned to apply for the DCED STMP (RFP) program, Commissioner Rodemaker seconded the motion; the motion carried.

- Commissioner Rodemaker motioned to hire Nicole Allen as permanent Part-Time Crossing Guard and Darlene Alfieri as substitute Crossing Guard at \$15.43 per hour, Commissioner Moffett seconded the motion; the motion carried.
- Commissioner Rodemaker motioned to advertise Ordinance 2023-04 Short Term Rentals; Commissioner Trojak seconded the motion; the motion carried.
- Commissioner Moffett motioned to hire Evan Lewis at \$24.21 per hour on the condition that all clearances are passed; Commissioner Trojak seconded the motion; the motion carried.
- Commissioner Golden stated that this year leaf pick up will take place 1 week per month in the months of October, November, and December. The dates will be announced at the next BOC meeting.
- ~Discussion of Liquor License – Commissioner Trojak’s concerns are the distance in regard to the schools and that it would not be in the best interest to have liquor sold close to those; she does not like the idea. Commissioner Moffet agreed with Trojak with the idea of it being close to the schools and he is not in favor of the transfer. Trojak also stated that it could be a traffic hazard with the potential for accidents. Commissioner Rodemaker stated it was wrong to penalize Mr. Nouri because of a “possibility” of an accident or that a student might have someone else buy them alcohol. Although Rodemaker does not drink he believes in a person’s right to do business. Rodemaker said that Erie Gas LLC is only trying to make a living and that this would generate revenue for the township. Everything that all the other Commissioners stated is based on emotion not on facts. The Nouri’s have not failed any inspection from undercover agents, vaping and drinking is happening in schools, but you cannot penalize this man because it “could” happen. Commissioner Trojak stated that it is the Boards job to think about the things that could potentially happen. Commissioner Golden agreed and stated that he wanted to be sure that a decision was not made that was not factual and even if it were approved today, it might not be at the next layer. Golden said that he utilizes Park and Go regularly but there is not a service that would not be provided because there is one provided nearby; a decision must be made in the area of safety. Commissioner Trojak motioned to deny an intermunicipal application transfer of liquor license R-10694 from the city of Erie to ERIE GAS, LLC Lawrence Park; Commissioner Moffett seconded the motion with Commissioner Rodemaker opposed the motion passed.
- Commissioner Rodemaker stated that the financial concerns he wanted to speak about were addressed in part by Mr. Buchleitner. Rodemaker also stated that he is very concerned with the direction the spending is going. Golden said that as we head into budget sessions decisions will not be based on emotions and that with the Townships best interest in mind.
- Commissioner Moffett motioned to accept the resignation of Commissioner Trojak from the Board Of Commissioners; Commissioner Rodemaker seconded the motion; the motion passed.

~Commissioner Rodemaker motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m., Commissioner Moffett seconded; the motion carried.~

Respectfully Submitted:

Cindy Jo Cunningham
Board of Commissioner’s Secretary