

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Chairman Grey Godshall called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Franconia Township to order on Monday, October 20, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Building, 671 Allentown Road, Franconia, Pennsylvania 18969.

Present were 1st Vice-chairman David B. Fazio, 2nd Vice-Chairman W. Keith Freed and Supervisors Curtis N. Kratz and Steven P. Barndt; Township Manager Jon A. Hammer; Assistant Township Manager Jamie P. Worman; Chief Joseph S. Kozeniewski; Township Solicitor Frank R. Bartle, Esquire; Township Engineer Cindy VanHise, P.E.; Building and Code Inspector Jerry Rittenhouse and Roger M. Koffel, and interested residents and non-residents of Franconia Township.

OPENING MEETING TO THE PUBLIC

Due to the large number of people in attendance for this meeting, Mr. Godshall asked if any of the public had comments to items outside of the budget. None Heard. He then established a few guidelines for the comment period. He explained that a motion would be made and seconded and then opened to the public for comment before acting on the motion. He requested that the public keep their comments to a four minute time frame.

***The comments listed below in the budget discussion were made by people who stated their names as listed, but they did not all sign in and verify such.**

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 2014 MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Kratz and seconded by Mr. Fazio to approve the September 15, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT – FRANK R. BARTLE, ESQUIRE

A motion was made by Mr. Fazio and seconded by Mr. Kratz to approve Resolution 14-23-20-10: A Resolution Specifying the 2014 Distribution of the Pension Allocation from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania pursuant to the Municipal Pension Plan Funding Standard and Recovery Act 205 of 1984. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Mr. Fazio and seconded by Mr. Barndt to authorize the Township Manager and Township Solicitor to Prepare an Application for a Tax Anticipation Note for 2015. The motion carried unanimously.

BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mr. Godshall made a motion to terminate all part-time seasonal public works employees. Mr. Fazio seconded the motion. Mr. Godshall then opened the floor for public comment.

Ms. Mary Scalfani, 360 High Street, requested that the BOS define “seasonal”. Mr. Godshall replied that seasonal applied to the additional employees hired for mowing and other seasonal responsibilities.

No additional comments were heard. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Godshall made a motion to eliminate the Township Administrative Assistant position. Mr. Fazio seconded the motion. Mr. Godshall then opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Gerald Thiel, 808 Allentown Road, asked what kind of money they were saving by the elimination of these positions. Mr. Godshall replied that they feel they can spread the duties of the Administrative Assistant out among the other staff but as far as the financial savings that would need to be compiled by Mr. Hammer so as not to be misquoted.

Ms. Mary Scalfani, 360 High Street, asked if there was a revised budget incorporating these changes. Mr. Godshall replied that they are building one.

No additional comments were heard. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Godshall made a motion to eliminate all part-time positions within the police department. Mr. Fazio seconded the motion. Mr. Godshall then opened the floor for public comment.

Ms. Maureen Walter, 1052 Kingscote Drive, asked how many people that involved. Mr. Godshall replied that that would include two part-time police officers and one part-time police secretary.

Ms. Tina Kell, 365 High Street, questioned if the part-time hours would be covered by full-time police officers through overtime. Chief of Police, Joseph Kozeniewski explained how the coverage would be handled and how 911 responses would be covered. Ms. Kell asked if the part-time positions received benefits. Mr. Godshall replied that the part-time positions were not benefitted and were hourly positions. Mr. Godshall continued that these motions were part of an overall plan that will contain other factors including a tax increase. Ms. Kell commented that the taxpayer will pay more and get less.

Ms. Lisa Blankenstein, 42 Knights Crest Drive, commented that by reducing the police staff the BOS was putting public safety on the line. Mr. Godshall replied that they are making the best decisions they can while still having affordable taxes. He added that they are taking everything into consideration.

Mr. John Cutrone, 228 Diehl Drive, commented that doing what you can afford is different than what you need to be safe. He continued that the residents need to know what the safe number of officers is for this Township. He added that he would pay higher taxes in order to be safe.

Mr. Gerald Thiel, 808 Allentown Road, questioned if the BOS was looking at all the cost line items and if they were cutting everything they could before cutting the essentials. He added that he opposed the reductions and that the numbers needed more studying. He requested they delay action. Mr. Godshall replied that they have looked at all the little things and the big things and that these decisions are not taken lightly including the satisfactory level of service.

Mr. Dave Meyers, 40 Cherry Lane, asked what the net savings was to the Township by laying off these individuals. Mr. Godshall replied between \$800-\$900K. Mr. Meyers asked how much money they were proposing to spend on salt and brine this year. He suggested that the BOS got the point he was making.

Ms. Kristi Bessette, 845 Keller Creamery Road, questioned if there was a third possibility of perhaps polling the residents to see if a significant tax increase would be supported in order to maintain the same safety level. Mr. Godshall replied that they have had that conversation but collectively over decades you get an understanding of what your residents can handle. Our Chief believes he can provide adequate coverage with this level of staffing. He continued, we have considered it all.

Ms. Stephanie Crecca, 338 Elmwood Lane, questioned what would be the cause or what would need to happen for the BOS to increase the force next year. Mr. Godshall said that if the Chief were to make a recommendation they would consider it at that time and address it then. He continued that they will still have 24/7 police coverage and the BOS is exploring the option of regional police coverage as well. Ms. Crecca asked if this doesn't work would the BOS have to wait a whole year before adding officers. Mr. Godshall said no.

Ms. Mary Cannon, 913 Harcourt Lane, questioned if these three part-time positions being eliminated are for next year. Mr. Godshall replied that it is effective immediately. Ms. Cannon questioned if there will be more or if this was enough to balance the budget. Mr. Godshall replied that they are looking long-term and believe the Township will be sustained through 2017. He continued that things could change so if and when that happens they will address it at that time.

Ms. Chris Wentz, 369 High Street, questioned how many hours the part-time officers worked now. Chief Kozeniewski replied that they fill in where needed so it varies.

Mr. Jay Shissler, 381 Schoolhouse Road, questioned if there were copies of the budget with the line items available to the public. Ms. Worman replied that the budget was available to the public and could be found on the Township website. Mr. Shissler then asked if the State could provide police coverage. Chief Kozeniewski replied that they would provide backup in the event of a major incident and we have mutual aid agreements with our neighboring police departments. Mr. Shissler added that he felt safe and that there was still coverage.

Mr. Jamie Lavin of the Upper Perk Police Department commented that there should have been a plan commenting that you don't hire officers just to later fire the officers. Mr. Godshall explained how the department originally increased through a state grant program and continued that over a 12 year period of time things changed. Mr. Lavin asked when the most recent hire occurred. Chief Kozeniewski replied that 2009 was

the last time the force was actually increased in size. The hires since that time have been replacement not additional.

A resident who did not sign in but mentioned her name, Robyn of Beck Road, commented that there is all this open space and two liquor licenses why isn't the township growing to bring in more revenues. Mr. Godshall agreed that Franconia has the highest percentage of tax-exempt properties in the area coming in at 22 percent. Robyn added that she had a pothole on her road that could have easily been fixed with cold patch from the Home Depot instead of an entire repaving of the roadway. She also noted that even the Pilgrim Pride site is not going to develop into anything other than a car dealership. Mr. Godshall replied that open space has been pursued but never at the expense of building.

Mr. Patrick McGuckin, 566 Creekside Drive, questioned why essentials such as police are being cut instead of recreational items. He added that to him parks and things of that nature were unnecessary and residents could just use state parks.

Mr. Joe Regan of the Fraternal Order of Police Union (FOP) commented that the non-profit entities plague communities by not donating to the tax base. He suggested the Township approach these entities and request a donation. Mr. Bartle replied that the Township is exploring that option. He explained though that when an entity is entitled to a tax exemption you can't do anything about that other than try to get cooperation but you can't force anything. Mr. Regan questioned if the Township has appealed to these entities given the tax crisis. Mr. Bartle replied that he did not want to portray this situation as a crisis. Mr. Brent Hoffinger of the Souderton Mennonite Home (SMH) announced that the SMH is in the process of entering a PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) agreement with the Township in which they will be paying full taxes to the Township. He added that they are glad to hear we will be maintaining a 24/7 police coverage or else he would have close to 650 residents out to a meeting in opposition.

Mr. Rich Hoffner, 415 Moyer Road, asked what the salary of a part-time officer was in the department. Chief Kozeniewski replied that it was approximately \$26.00 per hour. He added that they had budgeted around \$136,000.00 for part-time employment in 2014.

Mr. Dave Meyers, 40 Cherry Lane, questioned if there was contracted costs for state police. Mr. Godshall replied that they are not interested in going that route. He continued that they do value the officers and the services they provide. He added that they like having their own police department and that they are setting themselves up now for the future.

Ms. Stephanie Crecca, 338 Elmwood Lane, asked what the plan would be when the department is one man down. Chief Kozeniewski replied that in different scenarios an overlap officer would fill in.

Ms. Hoffner, 415 Moyer Road, asked when the layoff would go into effect and where the monies allocated for the part-time position would go. Mr. Godshall replied that he was not going to go into that level of detail but Mr. Hammer could provide her that information outside of the meeting.

Ms. Lisa Blankenstein, 42 Knights Crest, asked if there could be an across the board reduction in salaries until the budget is more stable. She also asked if the BOS had looked at cuts in other areas outside of the police department. Mr. Bartle replied that that is not a question for the BOS because of the contractual obligations through the collective bargaining agreement.

Ms. Maureen Walters, 1052 Kingscote Drive, questioned the shift coverage. Chief Kozeniewski replied that they operate on a 12 hour shift schedule and that there would still be at least one officer on at a minimum around the clock while the shift overlaps.

Mr. Jeff Boyd, 434 Turnberry Way, questioned where the budget oversight was over the past few years. He wanted to know how the budget was passed year after year. Mr. Godshall replied that he hears and understands what Mr. Boyd is asking and he explained that the expenditures increased while the revenues decreased. Mr. Godshall continued that he agrees that he should have seen it coming but even if it was addressed a few years ago they would still need to get to the numbers they need to get to this evening. Mr. Boyd then questioned if moving forward when the BOS sees that revenues are not meeting expenditures if modifications will be done immediately. Mr. Godshall replied that they will be monitoring the budget more closely and they have raised taxes in the past few years but it wasn't enough to fill the revenue gap. He added that they feel with the hiring of the new Township Manager that they have someone on board with a strong financial background that will help with the budget management moving forward. Mr. Freed commented that Mr. Boyd brought up a good point, using the Souderton Area School District pension situation as an example, that state aid has diminished and there has been a shortfall growing at a much quicker rate. Mr. Boyd then asked if Mr. Godshall would agree to forgo his stipend in light of the situation. Mr. Godshall agreed.

No further comments were heard. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Godshall made a motion to layoff four full-time police officers effective November 1st, 2014. Mr. Fazio seconded the motion. Mr. Godshall then opened the floor for public comment

Mr. Glenn Kranich, Franconia Township Police Officer of 17 years, expressed his disappointment and cautioned the BOS that they were getting rid of four awesome officers. Mr. Godshall replied that the Township cannot carry a 15 officer force they can carry an 11 officer force. He agreed that they are awesome officers but this decisions is not to fill a short-term problem but to sustain the Township into the future.

Mr. John Cutrone, 228 Diehl Drive, asked again what the safe number of police officers to run a 24/7 operation is and he added that it seems like the BOS has already made up their mind on this issue. He commented that he did not believe this was safe. Mr. Godshall replied that every Township would feel safer with extra police officers. The city of Philadelphia would probably prefer to have more officers but they can't afford more officers. We can afford 11 officers.

Ms. Nicole Peck, 851 Allentown Road, asked where the accountability is for how we got to this point. She questioned how the BOS plans on assuring the residents that this

won't happen again. Mr. Godshall explained the budget situation again stressing the expenditures outpacing the revenues. Ms. Peck questioned why there was no five year plan and she added that the budget on the website is balanced. Mr. Hammer explained the budget and offered to personally review the budget with Ms. Peck.

Mr. Bill Bittenbush, FOP, commented that the BOS says they're not in crisis but if you're laying off two part-time and four full-time officers, you're in crisis. He continued that all the layoffs are being announced with no real discussion about the budget numbers. He added that the BOS should not balance their budget on the back of officers. He asked if the BOS realized how stressful it is to be an officer. He then requested that they respectfully reconsider their decision.

A resident, Robyn, commented that this decision was very unsafe and that people will start moving out of the Township or getting licenses to carry.

Mr. Bruce Alder, 431 Turnberry Way, questioned that if they are decreasing staff by 25% was crime decreasing by the same amount. Chief Kozeniewski replied that the staffing wasn't based on an increase or decrease in crime. Mr. Alder suggested the BOS reconsider and cut non-essential services. He commented that this was inexcusable.

Ms. Carrie Horchuck, 122 Packham Court, expressed how upset she was over this decision and how unsafe it made the Township and her family.

A representative from the FOP commented that he noticed the Chariman rolling his eyes at the comment that police work is stressful. He then added that crime is coming in from the city because the criminals know there are fewer cops.

Mr. Chris Missimer of a neighboring police department cautioned that the removal of officers puts more strain on surrounding departments and it will be a change for the worse.

The financial officer of the FOP commented that he was a former Supervisor and that in this day and age a Township cannot afford to lay off a police officer. He suggested the BOS delay their decisions and poll the residents to see if they would agree to a tax increase in order to save these four jobs. Mr. Godshall replied that the BOS believe the response would be mixed. He added that based on their experience they have to make the decision.

Ms. Hoffner, 415 Moyer Road, commented that she agreed with Officer Kranich and that the removal of the officers puts a major strain on the families and the lives of the remaining officers.

A member of the audience, Jim Hamptons, questioned if the 24/7 staffing included the four officers. Chief Kozeniewski replied that it did.

Mr. Bob Selville, Upper Perk Police Department, suggested the BOS listen to their residents or else they won't be sitting in those seats again.

Mr. Gidell of the FOP asked why this issue was not a referendum. Mr. Bartle replied that in order for something to be a referendum it has to be because of a statute. This situation would not be eligible.

Mr. Kevin Fox, Hatfield Township Police Department, cautioned that officers from Hatfield Township would not be able to get to Franconia residents in a timely fashion.

The 911 County Dispatcher asked the officers in the room how long it takes to process an arrest and how many officers it required. The answer was a few hours with two or three officers. She then commented that by taking these officers off of the street you jeopardize other areas. She also suggested that the BOS try to get preferential treatment when it comes to call priority. She also asked what happened to the money. Mr. Barndt voiced his issue with her comments and stated that he would never even think of asking for special treatment.

Ms. Lisa Lacombe, 1056 Kingscote Drive, asked if the BOS had already voted on this and if not could it be tabled until more information is distributed to the public.

Mr. Ed Hall, 620 Mininger Road, questioned what the plans were to disseminate the information to the public so they can see a history of how this evolved with specifics. He suggested the possibility of a special public meeting to explain the current situation.

Ms. Stephanie Crecca, 338 Elmwood Lane, added that while she appreciated their concern about keeping taxes down, she agreed that tabling the decision and polling the residents was appropriate.

Mr. Godshall replied that this information is not new and that they did not publicly discuss layoffs because it is a sensitive issue. He continued that the collective bargaining agreement specifies the salary and benefits that will be paid out in the event of a reduction of force. We did not arrive at this decision lightly but given the information we believe it is the best decision moving forward. We did have a full presentation at the October 8th work session.

Mr. Patrick McGuckin, 566 Creekside Drive, asked the Chief if he could guarantee the same coverage that the residents have now. Chief Kozeniewski replied no. He also commented that Mr. Godshall first assured the crowd that they were fine with 15 full time officers and no part-time and now he is saying they are fine with 11 officers.

Mr. Gerald Thiel, 808 Allentown Road, questioned how much deficit there was and why it was being made up entirely by the police department.

Mr. Hoffner, 415 Moyer Road, suggested that given this unique budget circumstance a special meeting be held as this is not the routine passage of the budget. Mr. Godshall replied that while it is somewhat out of the normal routine that a lot of time has gone into this issue. He added that the BOS is right-sizing the Township and believe that in doing so this will still be a safe Township.

A few additional audience members supported the suggestion that the motion be tabled. One audience member voiced his opinion that he felt the layoffs were the right thing to do and that he did not feel his safety would be jeopardized by it. Mr.

Godshall replied that he appreciated the comments but was not inclined to table the motion.

There were no further comments. The motion passed unanimously.

POLICE REPORT – CHIEF JOSEPH KOZENIEWSKI

Chief Joseph Kozeniewski submitted the Police report for September 2014.

ZONING REPORT – JAMIE P. WORMAN

Ms. Worman submitted her report for September 2014.

HIGHWAY REPORT – PAUL R. NICE

Mr. Nice submitted the Highway report for September 2014.

ENGINEERING REPORT – CINDY VANHISE, P.E.

Ms. VanHise submitted his report for September 2014.

TREASURER’S REPORT – JON A. HAMMER

A motion was made by Mr. Barndt and seconded by Mr. Fazio to approve the Treasurer’s Report as presented, and to provide authorization for the Treasurer to pay all bills for the respective funds as presented on Voucher No. 14-20-10 dated October 20, 2014 in the amount of \$539,226.70. The motion carried unanimously.

PAYROLL

A motion was made by Mr. Barndt and seconded by Mr. Fazio for the Treasurer to be authorized to pay all employees during the pay period of October 18, 2014 through November 14, 2014 according to the hours worked as listed on the Payroll Journal for the aforesaid period. The motion carried unanimously.

LAND DEVELOPMENT

No action

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Franconia Township Planning Commission will hold Regular Meetings on Monday, November 3, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. at the Franconia Township Municipal Building, 671 Allentown Road, Telford, Pennsylvania 18969.

The next Regular Board of Supervisors meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, November 17, 2014 at the Franconia Township Municipal Building, 671 Allentown Road, Telford, Pennsylvania 18969. The Board of Supervisors Work Sessions will be held on Friday, November 7, 2014 at 7:00 a.m. and Monday, November 17, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. at the same location.

MOTION TO ACCEPT RESIGNATION

Mr. Godshall requested a motion to accept the resignation of Township Supervisor W. Keith Freed. Mr. Godshall expressed his appreciation for the decades of service Mr. Freed provided to the Township. Mr. Barndt regretfully made a motion to accept the resignation. Mr. Fazio seconded the motion. The motion passed.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

A motion was made by Mr. Kratz and seconded by Mr. Barndt to adjourn the meeting at 9:55 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon A. Hammer, Secretary