

The stated meeting of the Public Affairs Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, June 6, 2018 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Bowman presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 8:49 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioners BOWMAN, SCHREIBER, DiPLACIDO, MYERS
Excused: SPIEGELMAN

Township Manager MANFREDI
Assistant Township Manager WEHMEYER
Township Solicitor CLARKE
Superintendent of Parks & Recreation THOLEY

Also Present: Commissioners LUKER, KLINE, SANCHEZ, GILLESPIE, HECKER, ZAPPONE, THOMPSON, ROTHMAN, VAHEY, BRODSKY

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Bowman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to approve the minutes of the May 2, 2018 Public Affairs Committee Meeting.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

PRESENTATION: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Item PA-05-061418:

Commissioner Bowman said this item is to consider approving the agreement by and between Abington School District and the Township of Abington as recited and contained for the purpose of Township waiver of fees and School District waiver of permit fees and he called on Manager Manfredi.

Manager Manfredi said this matter was previously before the Board and, as a result of discussion during these public meetings, a meeting was held with representatives of the School District and various members of the Board resulting in proposed agreement by and between both parties. Information from the School District outlining everything they do for the Township in their request for this agreement has been provided to the Board.

Commissioner Bowman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Myers commented that she is in support of waiving these fees as we are two government agencies and this is tax money, so taking it out of one pocket and putting in another doesn't make sense to her. The Township has many agreements with the School District that help each other and she is in favor of it.

Commissioner Zappone asked for the reason of the waivers.

Commissioner Bowman replied Township and School District are both taxing agencies and waivers are being restricted to just the School District in an agreement between both parties. Why charge the School District that fee when the taxpayers will pay for it in the end.

Commissioner Zappone expressed concern about what will be done for the senior citizens of this Township. He does not think his residents would be happy with the decision of waiving hundreds of thousands of dollars, which is something he has fought for, for years. It is not right and it does not look right and he is defending the senior citizens and Veterans of this Township.

Commissioner Kline said he feels this agreement and waiving the fees does help the senior citizens because if the Township was to charge the School District then the School District would be adding fees to their budget with this project and any future projects. Also, he wants to be sure that this agreement is for Township/School District-related events and the 24-Hour Relay event is a sponsored event by CAPT and should be removed from the agreement.

He questioned why professional services' fees for outside consultants for review of land development projects are being waived in this agreement because they are fees the Township has to pay as part of overall expenditures for review of projects for the School District.

Manager Manfredi replied during discussion of the agreement it became more of an issue of shared-services, and in particular total cost that is being waived by the School District was greater than any fees that the Township would be charging, therefore they included professional services and all other fees.

Commissioner Kline said he understood this agreement to be that the Township is not transferring fees from one taxing entity to another and he did not know dollars were being counted trying to even out the balance sheet.

Dr. Amy Sichel, Superintendent of Abington School District, agreed that transferring fees from one taxing entity to another makes no sense; however, there are a lot of expenses that the School District waives on an annual basis and we waive all of the Township's fees and the School District would like that in return. We see this as a mutual agreement based mostly on taxes, but also in regards to dollar figures on a shared-basis, which is good for the community of Abington.

Commissioner Kline asked for costs for professional services as part of the School District's application for land development project for the high school.

Manager Manfredi replied we have not calculated that yet as it is just going through the process.

Commissioner Kline said he would like any events not specifically sponsored by the Township to be removed from this agreement.

Commissioner Bowman asked for any public comments.

Raymond Bell, 2076 Parkview Avenue, said he is opposed to any agreement of waiver of fees and he would like to see a dollar amount of waived fees. He agreed with Commissioner Zappone to "stop taxing senior citizens and stop taxing Veterans."

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, said she was opposed to the agreement. She asked for the figures of fees to be waived for the project and she feels the "Township needs a budget line for it as it is a huge project and the amount of money has never been discussed."

Commissioner Schreiber agreed that the nonprofits should be from the agreement. Also, her fear by not having this agreement in place would actually increase taxes for senior citizens and others as fees will increase for both entities. She will vote in favor of this to protect residents as she feels taxes will increase and not decrease.

Commissioner Myers said if these fees are paid to the Township they will still be passed along to Abington taxpayers in their school taxes, so we are not saving any money either way.

Dr. Sichel clarified that the School District has never paid for construction permits and never paid for professional fees, so we appreciate that this will continue, so therefore, there was no calculation for both permit and professional fees because we have enjoyed that relationship with the Township in the past. The goal this evening is to codify the agreement that both organizations enjoy. It is not because the School District is a nonprofit, but it is because the School District is a political subdivision and she will bring the suggestion of removing the nonprofits from the agreement before the School Board Directors, and with their approval, she will bring back a revised agreement to Manager Manfredi.

Commissioner Vahey said if the Township does not waive the fee and demands the fees, would the School District need to finance those fees?

Dr. Sichel replied she would need to discuss that with the School Board Directors and they would need to make a decision as to how they would choose to pay for it whether it would be financed from a bond fund or general fund.

Commissioner Vahey clarified that if it was financed there would be interest charges involved with that. Is that correct?

Dr. Sichel replied yes, there could be extra charges.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item PA-01-061418:

Commissioner Bowman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to ratify the submission of the grant application and adopt Resolution No. 18-024 authorizing the Township Manager to enter into any agreement between Abington Township and the Commonwealth Financing Authority to facilitate and assist in obtaining the grant.

Commissioner Bowman asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff. There were none.

Commissioner Bowman asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

Item PA-02-061418:

Commissioner Bowman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to adopt Ordinance No. 2156, amending Chapter 126 – “Real Estate Registry – Vacant Properties,” at Section 126-4 – “Registration Statement and Fees; Local Agent, “Subsection D – “Waiver of Registration Fee,” and he called on Manager Manfredi.

Manager Manfredi said this was an ordinance originally proposed by Commissioner Spiegelman, but primarily by Commissioner Schreiber. At a recent VPRB meeting, discussed were two changes as follows: Section 1. D. 1. “The Board of Commissioners *or Township Manager* may grant a waiver of fees,” Also adding to Section 3. iii – “Other *commercially reasonable* valuation method upon approval of the Board of Commissioners.” The question is whether this ordinance would need to be re-advertised due to proposed changes.

Commissioner Schreiber said she is in favor of these changes and she will wait to hear from Solicitor about the possibility of re-advertising.

Solicitor Clarke said current ordinance amendments being proposed are not substantial enough to require re-advertising. It can just be amended before the Board of Commissioners at its meeting next Thursday and then voted on next week if the committee moves it forward tonight.

Commissioner Bowman asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

Item PA-03-061418:

Commissioner Bowman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to adopt Resolution No. 18-025 the amended Pre-FY 2015, FY 2015 and FY 2017 Annual Action Plans are approved as presented. Authorizing the President of the Board of Commissioners to sign and submit the amended Pre-FY 2015, FY 2015 and FY 2017 Annual Action Plans to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Commissioner Bowman asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff. There were none.

Commissioner Bowman asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, asked for an “investigation on how HUD money is being used.”

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

Item PA-04-061418:

Commissioner Bowman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to authorize the CAO and second CAO to execute the Policy Statement and Permanent Agreement by and between the Township of Abington and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This authorization is also extended to the other related documents required by PDE to be executed and submitted to complete the application, and to further ratify the Township's support of and programming for an Abington Township Summer Food Service Program.

Commissioner Bowman asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Mr. Van Strother said for the second year, Abington Township will be offering free lunches for any child of the age of 18 or younger at the Crestmont Park beginning Monday, June 18th until Friday, August 17th. This year, the Township has the ability to directly contract with the State Department of Education resulting in better meal choices due to contracting with a different vendor providing better service that will reduce operating expenses because this vendor will bring food directly to Crestmont Park. We have a new facility to operate from as there is refrigeration and storage and the meals will be served outside of the building.

Commissioner Schreiber requested that this information to be included in newsletters and it is posted on the School District's website.

Commissioner Myers asked how will staffing be handled for the program this year and is it still required that the children have to eat the meals onsite?

Mr. Strother replied last year, Abington Township had two paid part-time seasonal employees working on this program, but because meals will be brought to the site this year, we can reduce it down to one staff person. Volunteers are welcome as long as they have their required legal background check documentation. It is still required that the children eat the meals onsite.

Commissioner Kline commended Commissioner Schreiber on how hard she worked on the continuance of this program.

Commissioner Bowman asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

Item PA-06-061418:

Commissioner Bowman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to approve appointments to the Economic Development Committee:

Randee Elton – Term ending 12-31-2020

Naish Patel – Term ending 12-31-2020

Michael Kelly-Cataldi – Term ending 12-31-2020

Commissioner Bowman asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Myers questioned whether this completes appointments to the EDC.

Manager Manfredi replied yes.

Commissioner Bowman asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Commissioner Bowman asked for any general comments relating to Public Affairs.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, expressed concern about the “wording of Police Pension Association letter and that the print should be larger on the card.”

Commissioner Myers asked how many complaints have Township staff received from residents that did not understand the letter or felt they were being coerced by the letter or the card inside of the letter.

Manager Manfredi replied he is not aware of any.

ADJOURNMENT: 9:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard J. Manfredi, Township Manager/Secretary

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