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UPPER MOUNT BETHEL TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS WS MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2025 – 7:00 PM

*This meeting was held in person and live streamed through the Upper Mount Bethel Township Facebook page.

I.

Supervisor Bermingham called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

In attendance were Supervisor Bermingham, Supervisor Eckman, Supervisor Erler, Supervisor Friedman, Supervisor Albert, Township Manager Graziano, Township Solicitor Karasek, and Township Engineer Coyle.

II.

APPROVE THE AGENDA

MOTION by Supervisor Friedman to move tabled item #2 to #1, and approve the agenda, seconded by Supervisor Eckman. Vote: 5-0.

III.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Solicitor Karasek made a brief statement regarding public comments. Public comments have gotten acrimonious. If someone has something to say that may be demeaning, embarrassing or disruptive to someone else, please consider not doing that.

Ray Higgins, Centerville Rd., stated that he would like to suggest renovating the Eastern Industries building into a place where families that may have been displaced due to a disaster could have a place to go.

Tara Mezzanotte stated that she would like the Board of Supervisors to consider her to be the Township's Liaison to Amtrak, which coincides with the NJDOT I-80 and PennDOT Rt. 611 projects. Supervisor Friedman recommended that Tara submit a letter of interest outlining what she would like the Board to consider.

Ron Angle, Million Dollar Hwy., commented on an individual who opposed Portland Borough drilling another well in the Township, as well as setting up road blocks to obstruct business coming in to the Township.

Sharon Duffield, Potomac St., commented on public comments, and being tired of listening to attacks made on individuals.

IV. DISCUSSION

Met-Ed Representative, Thea Lind was present via ZOOM to address some questions submitted by residents in regard to the recent power outages. Thea stated that Met-Ed is aware that it has been a hard year for the Township. River Rd has been the subject of older infrastructure, and a lot of older trees. Discussion/questions were about broken equipment, underground circuits, (which are on a 2yr inspection cycle), and get replaced as needed, staggered tree trimming is scheduled for this year, work on Sandy Shore Dr., is to begin in 2025, liability on appliances, (Met-Ed does not offer this), notifications can be selected on your account, Met-Ed workforce, substation insulators, equipment/pole/wire inspections, billing issues, reliability audits. Manager Graziano asked about trees that were marked last year to be taken down, will they be taken down this year. Thea stated that the circuit location may have changed, so those trees may not be taken down. Manager Graziano stated that when there is a power issue from River Rd. to Driftstone Campground, it affects residents all the way through Portland up to the Saddle Creek area and it never used to be that way.

Heather Fischer, Mayor of Portland Borough, commented on the number of power outages recently that are unacceptable and when will the notifications/alerts become more reliable.

Rosemary Madison, Sandy Shore Dr., commented on all the power outages and upgrading the message when someone calls in to report a power outage. Rosemary asked about obtaining some form of credit if there is a power outage and the cost keeps going up.

Joe Torre, Institute Dr., commented on a pole safety issue on Lake Minsi Dr. and would like Thea to address it.

Kay Bucci, Portland resident, stated that she has never seen such poor service from Met-Ed and the problem is called deferred maintenance

Anthony Kyzer, Lenape Tr., asked Thea how many outages she has had. We are paying customers and feel as though our voices are not heard.

Ron Angle, Million Dollar Hwy, commented on the rates, why the bills go up, and where Met-Ed is buying the power from.

Mark Mezger, Scenic Ct., commented on if/when the demand for power increases, will Met-Ed be able to modernize the Township's infrastructure for electricity. Thea stated the grid is in place to support growth.

Ray Higgins, Centerville Dr. commented on the timing of planned outages, not being held during a workday, and especially during sub-zero temperatures.

V.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Resolution No. 2025-02 Jacob Smith-Supervisor Bermingham read Resolution No. 2025-02. Jacob Smith is being honored with the Eagle Scout Award for the completion of the new Slate Belt Little League Sign, facilitating the painting of the murals on four dugouts and the concession stand at the Slate Belt Baseball fields in Upper Mount Bethel. **MOTION** by Supervisor Friedman to adopt Resolution No. 2025-02, seconded by Supervisor Albert. Vote: 5-0.

VI.

TABLED ITEMS

1. Haddad and Nordstrom Resolutions-Solicitor Karasek discussed the two Resolutions that deal with the Township's decision to rescind or withdraw from the County program. The grant applications were approved in 2023. The reason for the withdrawal is that the County expects the Haddad and Nordstrom properties to conform to new guidelines that have been submitted for Livable Landscapes. Heritage Conservancy will become involved with the two projects based upon the prior guidelines. **MOTION** by Supervisor Friedman to rescind/withdraw from the County program with respect to the Haddad and Nordstrom properties, seconded by Supervisor Albert. Vote: 5-0. **MOTION** by Supervisor Friedman for Solicitor Karasek prepare two new Resolutions to have the Heritage Conservation handle the Haddad and Nordstrom properties, seconded by Supervisor Erler. Vote: 5-0.
2. Resolution No. 2024-30 Plan Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Plan-**MOTION** by Supervisor Friedman to adopt Resolution No. 2024-30, seconded by Supervisor Albert. Discussion: Supervisor Bermingham asked Becky Bradley, if they decide to pass the Resolution and along the way they feel it is not working out, what would they remedy be? Becky responded you leave by Resolution and create your own Comprehensive Plan. Supervisor Erler asked the following questions: what would the total cost be for the Township? Becky did not have an exact figure, but roughly \$4.60 per resident, roughly \$30,000. Becky stated that it costs approximately \$50,000 to do a Comprehensive Plan, if we were to one ourselves. Supervisor Erler stated that he spoke with Jennifer Smethers, LMBT Manager, who stated that they just did their own Comprehensive Plan for \$20,000 (\$10,000 grant, \$10,000 they funded). Becky stated that we are required/mandatory, by the State, to have a Comprehensive Plan. Solicitor Karasek stated that he has never seen anything happen if a Municipality did not have a Comprehensive Plan. The Township's last Comprehensive Plan was done in 2020. Becky stated that UMBT shall retain its own planning commission and zoning hearing boards. Everyone retains their own authority; it just basically

means that we have some shared common goals that will help in obtaining support funding. There was a discussion on the 537 Plan. Solicitor Karasek stated, just to be clear, because he represents other Townships and Municipalities, if they adopt this Comprehensive Plan, they are going to have to change their zoning ordinance to meet the Comprehensive Plan requirements, to change their subdivision laws to meet the Comprehensive Plan requirements, is this correct? Becky stated that they have two (2) years, per the PA Municipalities Planning Code to review your subdivision and land development ordinance, your official map and your zoning, to see if it is consistent with the plan. Solicitor Karasek commented on the review of the Township Ordinance to see if it's a conformance with the Comprehensive Plan, if it is, fine, if not, perhaps some changes should be made, but he is not certain who's qualified to do that other than hire an outside consultant to make that review. Supervisor Erler stated that he spoke with Tina, our Zoning Officer, and she does not think there is a need for this plan. Becky stated that all municipalities included in this plan have adopted it. Supervisor Bermingham called for a vote. Vote: 4-1. Supervisor Erler voted no.

3. Ordinance No. 2024-04-Weight Limit and Sign Ordinance-Solicitor Karasek discussed the change he made to the Ordinance at the Board's request, to say for local deliveries or trucks/equipment that are being used to work at local properties along this restricted route. **MOTION** by Supervisor Friedman to adopt Ordinance No. 2024-04, seconded by Supervisor Eckman. Vote: 5-0.
4. Ordinance No. 2024-03 Well Ordinance-Solicitor Karasek stated that this is on the agenda for the Board to give him authorization to advertise. Supervisor Erler has not had a chance to review the Ordinance. **MOTION** by Supervisor Friedman to table this to the March 24th meeting, seconded by Supervisor Erler. Comment from Ron Angle, in regards to the meeting minutes of August 8, 2022, the question was asked what is the purpose of this well ordinance, does it have anything to do with RPL, Supervisor Friedman responded yes, it does. Judy Henckel stated that the minutes from the last three years of meetings of the well committee, no one ever said this is all about RPL. Vote: 5-0.
5. Supervisor Compensation Ordinance-Supervisor Bermingham discussed the Supervisor Compensation Ordinance in which there is a maximum amount that the Board could approve of. The new cap for Township's with a population of 5k to 9,999 is \$4,190 for the year. This is for new Supervisors coming in or re-elected Supervisors. This does not apply to the current Supervisors. **MOTION** by Supervisor Friedman to increase the Supervisor Compensation by 5% to the current \$2,500, \$2,625, seconded by Supervisor Eckman. Supervisor Erler suggested increasing it to the maximum of \$4,190 for the year. Supervisor Albert does not feel as though they should get paid anything. Supervisor Bermingham stated that a Supervisor does not have to take their salary, they can donate it if they choose to, which he did for two years. Vote: 4-1. Supervisor Albert voted no.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Treasurer and Asst. Treasurer Bonds-Manager Graziano discussed the Auditors recommendation to raise the bond for the Treasurer to \$7 million. Manager Graziano stated that for years, the bond for the Treasurer and Manager was \$2

million. The Treasurer (Supervisor Bermingham) is only in charge of one account, the Police Pension Plan. Manager Graziano and Supervisor Bermingham's bond will be \$3 million, for a cost of \$1,750 each. **MOTION** by Supervisor Friedman to set the bonds for the Manager and Treasurer at \$3 million, seconded by Supervisor Erler. Vote: 5-0.

**VIII.
EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Recess to Executive Session at 9:40 pm to discuss legal matters.

The meeting reconvened at 9:49 pm.

Solicitor Karasek stated that a potential litigation matter dealing with a Township resident was discussed in Executive Session. No action to be taken.

**IX.
ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Supervisor Erler announced the Hands only CPR and Stop the Bleed class will be held on March 11th, at the Mt. Bethel FH 6pm-8pm.

Manager Graziano stated that the tree on Lake Minsi will be removed tomorrow. Manager Graziano discussed the power outages that occur on River Rd. and effects those past Portland. This was due to an accident that happened last year that knocked out two poles, the switch was never replaced. And last, a shoutout to our local volunteer fire departments, who were very busy this weekend fighting fires.

Supervisor Bermingham thanked all those that donated clothes to the victims of the fire that took place last week. Supervisor Bermingham and Supervisor Erler are meeting with Cetronia Ambulance to discuss regional ambulance coverage. Congratulations to Mark Mezger, who received the 2025 General William GT Tuttle Junior Award for Business Accumen in Defense and Government.

**X.
ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION by Supervisor Erler to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 pm, seconded by Supervisor Albert. Vote: 5-0.