

LEHIGH TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

April 22, 2025

7:00 p.m.

- I. CALL TO ORDER. The Lehigh Township Board of Supervisors held their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Lehigh Township Municipal Building, 1069 Municipal Road, Walnutport, Pa. 18088. Vice Chairman Jerry Pritchard called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

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

Absent: Mike Jones

The Vice Chairman announced the Board met in Executive Session prior to the meeting to discuss personnel matters. No action was taken.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- A. April 8, 2025. Janet Sheats made a motion to approve the minutes of April 8, 2025. Cindy Miller seconded the motion. Cindy Miller noted a correction to the minutes on Page 13, 3rd Paragraph. She only recalls Roy Silfies name being mentioned. She does not recall the other two names that are listed being mentioned. All voted aye to approve the minutes with the noted correction. Motion carried.

III. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- A. General Fund Checks 28640 to 28671. Cindy Miller made a motion to approve these bills. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.
- B. State Fund Check 1620. Janet Sheats made a motion to approve this bill. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Maintenance Building
1. Vision Mechanical, Final Payment Request #12. Alice Rehrig reported the probes and thermometers are scheduled for installation on Saturday, April 26. Cindy Miller made a motion to deny Payment Request #12 until the work has been completed. David Hess seconded the motion. Jerry Pritchard questioned how

much money is being held. Alice Rehrig commented there is \$45,233.45 being held. Janet Sheats questioned if consideration would be given to authorizing Alice Rehrig to release the payment once the work has been completed. Cindy Miller commented she believes we need to wait until such time as everything has been installed and tested. Jerry Pritchard commented looking at it from the contractor's standpoint, they probably could use the money. Cindy Miller and David Hess voted aye. Jerry Pritchard and Janet Sheats were opposed. Janet Sheats commented she believes Alice Rehrig could be given the authority to release the payment once the work has been completed.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Well/Septic Isolation Distance Waiver, 538 Walnut Drive. There currently is a malfunctioning cesspool at this residence which is approximately 20 or 30 feet away from the well. The replacement area for the septic system falls under the best technical guidance because it is located 68 feet from the well which is within the 100 foot isolation distance. The property owner should be required to enter into an indemnification agreement as a condition of approval of the waiver. Cindy Miller made a motion to grant the waiver of the well septic isolation distance for 538 Walnut Drive with the condition of the property owner entering into an indemnification agreement. Janet Sheats seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.
- B. Resolution 2025-5, Record Destruction for Police Department. Cindy Miller made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-5. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.
- C. Property at Teel Road and South Cottonwood Road. Cindy Miller commented she received phone calls over the past week regarding a property owner at Teel Road and South Cottonwood Road. There is a .43 acre lot which was purchased through Sheriff Sale and the property owner was trying to place a camper on the property and live there. The neighbors have stood up and said no. At this point there is no camper on the property. A tow truck brought the camper to the site, but the neighbors blocked it and they left. The property owner has been in to see the Zoning Officer and the Zoning Officer has explained to the property owner numerous times as to what needs to be done to be in compliance, but has been ignored.

The neighboring property owner commented this has been a nightmare. They are still coming to the property and driving on other people's property. They keep driving onto the abandoned road and don't understand that it is not a throughway. They have cut down trees on other people's property and have thrown the rotten wood and debris onto other people's property for days. The Police were called and nothing was done. They then came to the property with a tow truck and a very old RV and she stood in

the road and told them they are not bringing that on there. She has now placed boulders at the closed end of Teel Road and along her portion of the abandoned road. They also continue to park on the bridge which is not in good condition. It seems as though the property owner believes it is her driveway. She is concerned about what could happen if the bridge were to collapse and who would be responsible. She believes that part of the reason that the Police were not able to do anything was because of a miscommunication in the office because not everyone knew the abandoned roadway was actually split and owned by each side of the road. She believes everyone is now on the same page. The property owner was back and has been parking in the corner which is not a safe location because of the numerous accidents which have occurred over time.

Jerry Pritchard questioned if there was any reason given as to why the property owner hasn't gone through the proper process. The resident commented it is a little hard to communicate with the property owner because she does not speak English and needs to have an interpreter with her. Cindy Miller commented she has been in the office numerous times and the Zoning Officer, through a translator, has thoroughly explained what she needs to do, but she hasn't done it.

The neighbor also commented that she knows the Engineer was out at the site but doesn't know what the outcome was of that. Cindy Miller commented the Zoning Officer had the Township Engineer go to the site to see if there were any wetlands and if the Conservation District needed to be involved because there is a stream that runs through the property. Alice Rehrig commented the initial report was that the wetlands are confined to the area of the stream. At this point, they haven't done anything within the wetlands that is an issue, but it is something that will need to be identified to determine where it would be possible to place a structure on the site.

Linda Roman questioned if there are any survey markers on the site. If there are no markers, someone should have their property surveyed so they know exactly where the property lines are.

- D. Land Preservation Program Discussion. Zach Szoke commented he spoke with the Chairman today and got an idea of how the Board is feeling about things and that the Board is looking for community outreach for exactly what this entails and the benefits of this, along with the costs, to try to get some sort of public opinion regarding this.

Janet Sheats commented if the Board decides to move this forward, she believes there is a few months before the Board needs to decide whether this would go to referendum in the fall or spring of next year.

Jerry Pritchard commented he would suggest sending a letter to each resident explaining how the program works. He believes the more people who are aware of this, the more feedback that will be provided. The residents as a whole will have a greater understanding of this.

Mike Hock and Zach Szoke commented they had brought this concept to the Board a few months ago. They were proposing getting into a land and open space program for Lehigh Township, similar to what has been done in neighboring municipalities. This would be a tax payer funded land preservation program to help preserve open space, park lands and farmlands. Basically, any willing landowner who wants to see their property or farm preserved, the Township could help out with funds and the necessary steps to protect that property forever. Zach Szoke commented when they say preserved, it would basically mean that it couldn't become a housing development. Mike Hock commented the goal is so that Lehigh Township doesn't look like Whitehall Township or Lower Macungie where they are booming and growth doesn't stop or slow down. He was speaking with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission yesterday and they told him to be prepared for what will happen in the next 10 to 20 years with what will happen with federal funding and housing in the Lehigh Valley. His idea is to put the preservation program in place now to start building up funds to preserve what is left of our open space and farmlands before it is not here anymore. They are now looking for what the Board would like to see as the next steps to move this forward. They were hoping to see this on the November ballot, but it could be a tight timeline based on what the Board is asking, but understand that there should be community outreach and an understanding of the program because it is taxpayer funded.

Attorney Backenstoe commented the Board will need to decide if they want to institute a program where the Township collects Earned Income Tax for the purpose of preserving open space and farmland. If the program is eventually adopted, there would be a .25 percent fee placed on the earned income tax that could solely be used for the preservation of open space and farmland. If the Board is interested in moving forward with the program, the first thing they would need to do would be to adopt an ordinance authorizing a referendum on the ballot. The referendum would be a question to the voters "Are you in favor of a .25 percent increase in earned income taxes in order to be used by the Township solely for the purpose of preserving open space or farmland preservation?" If the ordinance passes, the referendum question is created and then sent to the register of elections. It must be sent in 13 Tuesdays before the election and it would appear on the ballot. If the majority of the voters vote in favor of it, the Township would have an open space program. The following year, the Township would assess the additional tax. Before the Township can spend any money, they need to create an Environmental Advisory Committee or similar Board to oversee the program. This Board would need to establish criteria. They

can't just randomly decide on whose property will or won't preserve. It must be uniform criteria, such as size of the property, soils, location, and topography.

The money that is received from the program will start to accumulate relatively quickly. There are three ways that the money can be spent. One way is to just do it yourself where the farmers or people who want open space can fill out an application. The Board would then review it. Most of the costs associated with the program would be able to be paid from the funds that are collected. One of the costs associated with the program would be an appraisal for fair value of the land for preservation. The Township could just buy the land and have it as preserved land that could be farmed or kept for open space. More times than not, the Townships work with the County for farmland preservation and work with conservancies for open space because there is much more bang for the buck. Northampton County has a very good program for farmland preservation and often times a farmer will go to the County first to see if they qualify. Sometimes the property doesn't qualify and the Township standards may be less rigid or slightly different so they would request the Township partner with the County. The County would pay for half of the preservation and the Township would pay the other half. This is a benefit because the County will absorb the costs of the appraisal, title search, and the monitoring that needs to occur. The open space program is just raw open space, environmentally sensitive land, such as woodlands or wetlands. The County is less involved in the open space preservation and Townships often partner with a conservancy, such as Wildland Conservancy or Nature Conservancy. These entities only do open space easements. By working with them, the Township's do not have to shoulder the load. The Township wouldn't have to go out and get the appraisals, do the title search, do the environmental investigations and inspections. The conservancies will do that for the Township. The Township's may need to pay for the work, but the conservancies have people in place that do this and do the work. They can make recommendations on whether or not the property could have public access. Usually this is not a fee simple purchase, but rather a conservation easement, meaning that the property owner retains title to their land, but they have sold the development rights. Wildland and Nature Conservancies also have people who are trained full time inspectors who go out and make sure the property that has been acquired is in compliance with the program. There are occasions where the parents sell their development rights from a farm and as time goes on the land is left to the kids and the kids don't want the farmland and they want to try to sell and develop it to get more money. When this happens, the County and the Township have to file injunctions to stop this because there is a vested right in the property and there are recorded easements. The land is able to be sold, but only as a farm, not for development.

In summary, there are two halves to the program. There is farmland preservation where you typically buy an easement prohibiting any type of development on the property by the owner, their heir, and assigns. The other side is the open space where a conservation easement is purchased where the property owner still owns their woodlands or wetlands, but it can never be sold for development.

Steve Sisko commented he was at the Zoning Hearing Board two weeks ago regarding this same issue. He is an adjoining property to someone who wants to put a commercial business next to him. The language in the zoning ordinance needs to be updated because it is very ambiguous. He is in the Agricultural/Rural Residential Zoning District. The neighboring property owner took the position he can grow grapes, put in a winery, and have a bar and wedding venue in the middle of the residential neighborhood. He brought forth to the Zoning Hearing Board, the mandates of the Rural Residential ordinance preserving the rural character of our area. This neighbor was trying to create a nightclub. He already created it. He was acting on it and then came in for permission after everything was put in place for the winery. He was denied. Mr. Sisko commented his request is to update the language in the zoning ordinance. Someone can grow apples and open a bakery. Cindy Miller commented for over a year now, there has been an Ad Hoc committee that has been working on updating all our zoning and SALDO. It has been 20 years since the ordinances have been updated. Unfortunately, the consultant they were working with became very ill so they needed to retain another consultant to complete the zoning ordinances. She knows the Zoning Officer, Township Engineer, and Consultants have been working on the SALDO. She is hoping to have a draft of the ordinances to the Ad Hoc committee in a few months for review. Then there will be a public hearing and the Board of Supervisors will review it. They are trying to tighten things up and include new definitions in the Zoning Ordinance because of all the changes that have taken place over the years. Katherine Mack commented she believes he will be filing an appeal. There is a concern regarding the appeal because of the Acre Laws and the Right to Farm Act. Cindy Miller noted agriculture in Pennsylvania is a sensitive area. It is a very protected industry. Mr. Sisko commented there is nothing wrong if he wanted to grow grapes, but he is not interested in that. He wants to open up a bar and host weddings. That is his objective. He is already doing that. Katherine Mack noted his daughter got married there. Mr. Sisko commented that when the wedding occurred, it went on until 11:00 p.m. and he used his front yard for a parking lot. He submitted a complaint to the Zoning Officer and she did a good job. The Township has been great with addressing these issues.

Katherine Mack commented the only place a winery is allowed is in a PRRC District. Soaked existed because they received a variance. Mr. Sisko commented they lied regarding that and extended upon it and ignored the variance. Mike Hock commented

with land preservation, it is forever. There are no variances. Katherine Mack commented variances are forever, but they need to be enforced.

Phil Gogel questioned if it can be delineated from the information regarding the purchases as to how many of the farms were left go and are just an eyesore as opposed to those who continue to be farmed. He is for agricultural preservation, but if the land is not being preserved for farm land or agricultural use, he is reluctant to give up his money to give it to someone. Mike Hock commented if a farm is being preserved through Northampton County, it has to stay as active agriculture. Forestry is also considered to be agriculture. His organization is more involved in open space conservation so that if it is woods today, it is woods tomorrow and nothing is changing from a landscape perspective.

Dave Shafer, a Moore Township Supervisor, commented if a farmer does not put a crop in their field or lets things go dormant, the County will make them go out and spray for invasives. There was a 45 acre farm in Moore Township that the owners became elderly and had to move, but they didn't want to take the time to go through the two year process with Northampton County, so they came to the Township and said they wanted it preserved, would the Township consider buying it. Moore Township paid the appraised value and bought the farm and went through the preservation process. Once the process was complete and the farm was preserved, Moore Township then put the farm out to public bid. He submitted a sealed bid to purchase the property, built one home, and leases the farm to a farmer. This property is preserved forever. The one house on the property and farm use will be there forever. Another property Moore Township purchased, they subdivided twenty acres off of it with two ponds. They own it; it is their park and open to the public. Money from property that is sold goes back into the fund to purchase more easements. They have had this program in effect since 2005 and have had great success. They use Wildlands Conservancy and Heritage Conservancy. They are not really involved with Northampton County. The County pretty much gets their own applications and does their thing. The reason they don't partner with the County for open space is because the County requires public access and most people do not want to provide public access to their property. He would encourage the Board to take the vote to have Attorney Backenstoe prepare the ordinance. While Attorney Backenstoe is working on the ordinance in the background, there still could still be a platform for a public presentation in September, October, and let the residents decide in November.

Janet Sheats commented she is not ready to take a vote on this right now. She believes everyone has a right to know how this works. She also did some research and learned that there is a way to remove property from the easements. It is quite costly and the courts do not have to agree to it. Attorney Backenstoe commented he

is not aware that this has ever happened. The point is that it is supposed to be forever. She is also concerned of the financial implications. Because the development rights have been purchased, the property will have a lower resale value in the future. She would like to see a tax payer meeting and have the public give the Board feedback. She is not comfortable voting on this until she hears from the public. If this is going to be done, she is thinking it would be spring of 2026.

Jerry Pritchard commented there are more and more people interested in hearing about this based upon the meeting attendance. He would like to see it to the point where it fills up the fire house. Once you get to that point, then you can get the true feeling of the people. You got to get the word out and get more people interested to offer their opinion. Mike Hock commented he believes their concern is if they spend all the money to mail letters and do presentations regarding this, and the Board does not move this forward to referendum, then it is time and money wasted.

Matt Riley commented if this is something that is in front of the Board to vote on, why not put something out there to make it easier on everyone, such as in the newsletter. Janet Sheats commented the next available newsletter is not until the fall. They could also put something on their website. Matt Riley commented it seems like this is something that is just getting pushed off. Janet Sheats commented this is a big deal and she does not know a lot about this. She wants to know all the ins and outs of this, especially if the taxes are going to be going up because of it.

Kathy Riley commented people did not move here because they wanted developments. She didn't. She moved here twenty years ago and the last thing she wants to see is the Township be like Whitehall. We need to preserve our land. She is not happy about the development going in off Timberline. Why would we want to have people develop their land in a Township that can't maintain the roads they have.

Cindy Miller commented she thinks people need to come out when we have the new Zoning and SALDO. Residents need to come to the public hearings and voice their opinion as to what has been derived at. There is only so much that the Township can do. The Township has to follow State Laws; we must follow the MPC. They also have to pay attention to the increasing of taxes. Every time the Township considers a tax increase, there is push back. Matt Riley commented part of the reason for that is that there are a lot of roads that need a lot of attention. Cindy Miller commented the question becomes do you want to pay .25 percent for the open space or to have your roads done. Matt Riley commented he would rather see the open space and preserve our farms and keep things the way they are now than them turn into the crap like the rest of the areas around here and still have the roads fixed. Whenever there is a pipe crossing, there is a divot in the road.

Lisa Pignataro commented when the pig farm was being proposed, the 13 families in Heather Court chipped together and sent out mailers to every single family. That is the only way to get it to people to come out. She would be very willing to work with Mike Hock and Zach Szoke to get the word out.

Tom Szoke commented he bought 35 acres at Quince Road and Timberline Road that had a conservation easement on it. When they bought the property he had a lot of questions regarding the decision. There is a wealth of knowledge that comes out of the Conservancy that helps you understand the program. It is a great program.

Kelsy Weber commented she purchased land on Timberline Road. She was raised in Lehigh Township and bought the acreage to raise her own family. She knows this process takes time, but is concerned that it is being pushed to next year because people are coming in non-stop looking to build up vacant areas. She doesn't want to see these crazy developments with cookie cutter homes and warehouses. She would like to see this moved faster if at all possible. Janet Sheats commented the Planning Commission has been working hard to try to keep Lehigh Township ahead of the curve and not allow warehouses to go up all over. Cindy Miller commented warehouses are only allowed in the Industrial Zoning District. That is why she believes it is important for people to come out to the public hearings for the zoning ordinance and SALDO so that there is a better understanding of what we have. If people still want to do preservation, then so be it. She believes there is a misconception about the zoning in the Township. They worked hard to restrict the warehousing in the Township and it is only permitted in the Industrial Zoning District which is primarily on Route 145. Janet Sheats commented people tend to not understand what is going on and base things on social media which can be good and it can be bad. This is why she wants the residents to be educated on what is really happening and going on, not that they think we are just putting warehouses where ever they think they can. Kelsy Weber commented she thinks it is great that the Board is looking at the best interest for everyone, but at the same time, she is willing to pay more tax dollars to preserve this and have it stay as is and not go downhill.

Kristen Soldridge commented she is all about farmland; her family has had a farm in Lehigh Township for many years. Farmland preservation is great, but you need to understand what farmland preservation is versus open space preservation. There is so much more to this process that needs to be looked at and reviewed before a decision is made. The Ad Hoc committee and Planning were here for hours on end trying to make sure our ordinances are the best they can be while following State Law. The warehousing that took place in other parts of the area took place because they were behind the times and not aware of what is going on. There are Board members who are on Planning and are on the forefront of what is going on in Harrisburg that has come here. Because of this knowledge, it has limited the amount of warehouses and

additional development coming in here. At the end of the day, it is the almighty dollar. The property on Quince sat vacant for many years because the developer was waiting for public water and sewer. That never happened so he tried to come in and tried to get houses on it, but his health deteriorated and his daughters sold it. If someone wants to preserve a farm, they can buy it rather than coming to the Township just because they want to see open space and farmland preservation. Most of the farms in the Township are already in preservation and have gone through the process. Mike Hock commented most farms are in Act 319, not preservation. Kristin Soldridge commented the different options are not being discussed. There are purgatory easements, there are other optional acts where farms are not in it forever. All the options need to be explained and everyone needs to understand it. Everyone hears farmland preservation and it is great, but there is so much more. The Board of Supervisors will need to appoint a Board. Sometimes the Board can't find people to go on the Boards that we already have. Once the Board is developed, how will it be evaluated. There needs to be protocols and securities in place. Once the Board is formed and someone leaves, who will be the replacement and will they have knowledge of what needs to be done. There is so much more to this process that needs to be considered before the Board can vote on it. The School Board is considering a four percent tax increase because of the growth. The bulk of the properties that used to be farms were sold because no one wanted to buy those properties or they couldn't afford it. You need to consider everything that is involved with the program, not just the glitz and glamour of it. Take all the avenues into consideration. This will be another level of government that people will have to go through if they want to do this. Why not just work through the programs that are already there with the County and the State.

Mike Hock commented he appreciates the efforts made through zoning, but zoning is not permanent. It is a tool. Land preservation is another tool that can be used as well. It is a tool for residents as well. A farmer can preserve his farm and get paid so he can still afford the farm and keep it within the family. It is a great opportunity. It was mentioned that taxes are going up because of growth. This is a tool to control the growth. Kristin Soldridge commented the taxes are not going up because of growth. It is because the cost of education is so much more significant than what it used to be. The charts showed it costs \$13,000 to educate a student. That amount does not include special education or other students who may have impairments. There is a lot more involved in this as well. Mike Hock commented that studies have shown residential development costs townships money. For every \$1 they take in, in taxes, it costs another \$.16 in expenses.

Zach Szoke commented participation in the program is voluntary. There currently are 1,034 acres preserved in the Township. 1,000 in farmland and 34 in open space.

There are 305 parcels of 10 acres or more that would qualify under this program. These parcels total 7,498 acres. There is plenty of acreage available in the Township.

Kristin Soldridge commented it is voluntary if someone wants to do it. The County started their program in 1988 or 1989. If people are really interested, she believes they would have already applied. Zach Szoke commented that would only apply to farmlands. Kristin Soldridge commented it is still voluntary, but the tax is not voluntary. When the fire tax discussion took place, it was a heated discussion because people do not want to be forced to pay for something they may not necessarily agree with.

Marc Kercksmar questioned how many of the 305 parcels are actually willing to go into this program. Does it make sense to tax the entire community if only 20 of those parcels are willing to enter into the preservation? That would be an effect on the taxpayers. He believes the 305 people are the ones who should be notified and asked about the program. These are the people who should be asked about the program. If only 25 come back, it may need to be a whole other conversation.

Clay Cooper commented the residents now need to pay a fire tax and a cop stole money from the Fire Company. The Township used the tax money to float them money. Why wasn't the public asked if their tax money could be used to replace the money? Cindy Miller commented that was not something that could be put on a referendum and the Township gave them a loan and they paid the Township back within a few months. The money that was stolen was backed by a bond and when the Fire Company received the money from the insurance company, they repaid the Township. Janet Sheats noted it was not tax money that was stolen. It was Fireman's Relief which is given to them by the State. Mr. Cooper questioned with the amount of money that was taken, why wasn't it caught earlier. This and the fact that we have to pay for a Chief of Police who shouldn't be here anymore, we are paying a tax now of two hundred and some thousand dollars because we couldn't cover the bond because of his sexual harassment on a female officer. He is a liability. Cindy Miller commented the Board cannot discuss the details of the lawsuit.

Phil Gogel commented there is a bit of a panic as far as us looking like Macungie. We don't have the infrastructure to do high density housing here. Our sewer and water is very limited in the Township. The Municipal does not have plans for expanding the water and sewer in the foreseeable future.

Tom Szoke commented the land preservation is not trying to be forced, but we do need consider that when a tax dollar is paid, there is another \$.16 cents being paid out. Mark Szoke commented for every \$1 that a residential property pays in taxes, the Township actually has to pay \$1.16 for the services that are provided. Residential

properties are actually a net drain on a tax base. Right now, things are offset because we still have enough undeveloped property to offset those costs. This continues to change. We can outgrow our tax base with costs in a short period of time.

Mike Hock questioned if a Board sanctioned event could be held at the Fire Company. Cindy Miller commented she would prefer to have the zoning public hearing before we move on to this. She believes people need to understand the zoning what goes on at the Township first. It is more knowledge for everyone to have to make a better decision. The ordinances should be done this fall.

Kristin Soldridge commented she supports the farmland 100 percent, but there is a lot of background that needs to be understood and she doesn't believe people are at that point yet. With regard to Ad Hoc and the zoning, they have worked hard to get this to where it is. This is where everyone needs to come in and understand what the ordinances are, how they impact your property, and use your property. Everyone likes to come in and point the finger and get mad at the Zoning Officer and she has to shoulder a lot of things she shouldn't have to, but she does to help the Township out. If the Zoning Hearing Board approves something, it is because they went by the book. It works the same way with Planning. She would like the residents to give the Township a chance to get everything in order so everyone is aware. The ordinance needs to be written first. If the ordinance is not written, nothing else matters.

Mike Hock commented he believes the preservation and the zoning ordinance are two separate issues. Cindy Miller commented they are not separate. There is a Comprehensive Plan also. Everything works together.

Janet Sheats commented she thinks there should be a full Board for the discussion, but feels there is a need for a Town Hall meeting at the Fire Company. It will be hard to get everything done by the end of the year and doesn't want to keep pushing things off. This can be put on the agenda to discuss moving forward with a Town Hall.

David Shaffer commented if this is pushed to May, you will need to wait another year before you can start accumulating the funds. The EIT fund can be used for more than just the preservation. Based on the recent changes in the law, a portion of the money can be used to pay for the parks and passive recreation. They are just looking for the Board to vote to get this on a referendum. There is enough time to get this on the ballot for a referendum in November.

- E. Manager's Report. Alice Rehrig commented the CDBG grant submission is due in mid-May. She is planning on submitting for funding for Timberline, Spring, Deer Path, and Carl Drives. She will need an engineer's estimate for the grant, but in doing some rough calculations, the total for the roads will be over \$500,000. She

doesn't want to submit for much more than that because there is a ratio that they look at as far as cost and people benefiting. There also is funding available in the Timberline Road Fund.

The GroNorCo grant is also due at the end of May. This is a 50/50 matching grant up to \$50,000, but most of the awards that are given out are \$10,000 to \$25,000. Alice Rehrig was suggesting putting in funding for the replacement of the sign in front of the Municipal Building with a programmable LED sign.

Last meeting there was discussion regarding the damage to the cabinet on the flashing warning sign on Route 248. The cabinet has been remounted to the pole, but it is recommended that it be replaced. The cost for the replacement is \$3,500. Alice Rehrig has submitted a claim to the insurance company of the individual who damaged the cabinet. Once she hears back from the insurance company, she will know what if any cost there will be to the Township.

Alice Rehrig received a notice that the Township will be receiving a deposit in the amount of \$123,000 from the State for reimbursement through the RACP grant. With this payment coming in, the interim loan for the building will be paid down to \$19,000. Once the final payment is made to Vision Mechanical, she will be able to submit her final payment request which will release additional funds. There will be a hold back of \$60,000 until the State completes the final audit on the project.

1. Road Projects. Frank Zamadics provided a list of roads to be repaired and oil and chipped. Depending upon the final pricing of the bids, one or two of the roads may need to be eliminated. If there is no objection by the Board, Alice Rehrig would like to advertise the project as listed and then cut back as necessary. There was no objection from the Board to placing the project to bid.
2. Insurance Renewal. Alice Rehrig reported she was in touch with two additional brokers to provide quotes for the insurance, but they declined to offer a proposal because they were unable to compete against the rate of the current carrier. Our current broker went to three additional carriers and they declined to quote because of the loss history. The premium for the renewal will be \$70,386, which is approximately a seven percent increase.

John Knoblach questioned how many companies were asked about quoting the insurance and refused to quote. Alice Rehrig commented our current broker went to three carriers who would not quote because of our loss history. Mr. Knoblach questioned if this was a result of the lawsuit. Alice Rehrig commented they look at everything, which would include any liability or property claims. Mr. Knoblach questioned what the new rate was compared to the old rate before the lawsuit. Alice

Rehrig commented she didn't have the premiums with her from prior years. The Township did not have any significant increases after the suit. The carrier that was responsible for the claim payment no longer handles municipal insurance. Because we needed to switch, the total costs of the suit were not available at the time of the initial quote for the switch. Even though this is our third renewal with Selective and the claim history is available, they have not significantly increased our rates because of it. Last year, the largest part of the premium increase was because of the addition of the new public works building. This seems to hold true to the current renewal where the property insurance is where most of the increase is.

Monica Brown questioned if the premium included the workers comp insurance. Alice Rehrig commented the workers comp insurance is a different insurance which renews at the beginning of the year. Monica Brown commented there is a limited market for carriers who insure municipalities; it is not like a typical business. Workers Comp is another area of insurance where losses are reviewed. Alice Rehrig commented the broker shops workers comp each year as well. We currently are in a pool which has had lower rates. The rates themselves have been steady, but the final premium is driven by losses.

F. Solicitor's Report. Attorney Backenstoe did not have anything additional to report.

- VI. PUBLIC COMMENT. Phil Gogel commented he believes that since Mike Jones was offered to have his property preserved first through Farmland Preservation, he should be abstaining from the vote. He would have a potential monetary gain. This would be on the tapes from four meetings ago. There was a statement made that once the preservation program was approved, they would look at his property first. This statement was made by David Shaffer. Janet Sheats commented we could check the tapes. Alice Rehrig commented she doesn't keep the tapes from old meetings.

A resident (John) commented he works for a farm that is in farmland preservation. As far as his knowledge, it is very easy to get into the preservation program through Northampton County. The farm he works for has over 180 acres that are preserved and have another 60 in process. The program is voluntary. Yes, the taxes will go to pay for it, but in the end, you are saving all the property around here. In his opinion, zoning is not the same as preservation. If someone wants to preserve their property, they don't need permission from zoning to do so. Cindy Miller commented the reason she wants people to hear the zoning is because she wants them to understand which properties are designated as commercial and residential so they have an over view of everything rather than not understanding it at all. He also has 1,400 acres in the Poconos that are preserved through the Nature Conservancy. The benefit with the Conservancy is that they are able to set aside some of the land in the event they want to do something with it later.

Board of Supervisors Minutes
April 22, 2025

Linda Roman questioned what the difference in taxes is on the 1,400 acres after it was preserved as opposed to what they paid prior to it being preserved. The resident declined to comment.

Katherine Mack noted the State Check 1620 wasn't included on the agenda that was placed on the table for the public.

Paul Nikisher questioned if there is a completion date for the fence in Berlinsville. Jerry Pritchard commented he spoke with Devin Scott at the end of last week. The posts are in. He is waiting on the delivery of the rest of the material which is expected at the end of this week and he will continue with the installation over the weekend.

A resident questioned if the Board would consider changing the hours of the Yard Waste Site so that it is open on Sundays now that there is a way of tracking who goes in and out. A lot of people do yard work over the weekends. The Board asked this be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. The Board went into Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining matters. No action was taken.

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