

LEHIGH TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

February 24, 2026

- I. CALL TO ORDER. The Lehigh Township Board of Supervisors held their second monthly meeting on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Lehigh Township Municipal Building, 1069 Municipal Road, Walnutport. Chairman Mike Jones called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

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

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- A. February 10, 2026. Janet Sheats made a motion to approve these minutes. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

III. APPROVAL OF THE BILLS

- A. General Fund Checks 29409 to 29445. Cindy Miller made a motion to approve these bills. Janet Sheats seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.
- B. State Fund Checks 1642 and 1643. Cindy Miller made a motion to approve these checks. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.
- C. Check 29446, Spartan Emergency Response. Janet Sheats made a motion to approve Check 29446 to Spartan Emergency Response. David Hess seconded the motion. Cindy Miller reminded the Board of the motion that was made in July of 2023. Based upon that motion, the Township should only be responsible a total of \$1.55 million towards the truck. We already paid \$614,968 leaving a balance of \$935,032 owed by the Township on this bill. The remaining balance of \$288,726 was to be the responsibility of the Fire Company through either fundraising or a loan. The motion that was made in 2023 was "Lehigh Township will authorize the purchase of the ladder truck with these conditions:
- Lehigh Township will commit at this time \$1,550,000 for the ladder truck.
 - Lehigh Township will use \$600,000 in the capital fund allocated for large fire apparatus.

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- Lehigh Township will use up to \$200,000 of the American Rescue Plan Act money towards the ladder truck, if necessary.
- Lehigh Township will research, develop and pass a fire tax ordinance to be implemented January 1, 2024. Details of the ordinance will follow. The Board will work on that.
- Lehigh Township will keep the large fire apparatus in the capital plan, but use the fire tax money to pay for the apparatus.
- The ladder truck will be paid in full the 3rd year as per the proposal showing 906 days.
- The next large piece of fire apparatus will be purchased minimally in three years after the total acquisition of the ladder truck.
- The Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will order the chassis to the ladder truck by July 31, 2023.
- Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will re-evaluate the specifications to determine the needs versus wants of the ladder truck just to see if the cost can come down from where it is.
- The Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will start a capital campaign for the balance of the money. A physical thermometer billboard will be displayed along Route 248 that shows the dollar value obtained for the Truck to include the Township money when allocated by year to see the growth in the campaign because we have \$1,550,000 so we are short.
- An online means to raise money will be provided by the Fire Company. Whether it be direct to the fire company, GiveSendGo or GoFundMe. This money will be used only for the purchase of the ladder truck.
- Should the capital campaign for the ladder truck come up short, the Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will take out a 2% state loan for the balance of what is due.
- Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will place the current ladder truck for sale within 60 days from receipt of the new ladder truck. The proceeds from the sale will be used toward the payment of the new ladder truck. If the

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- proceeds are not needed for the new ladder truck purchase, the money will be put into the fire tax account and used to purchase the next new large fire apparatus.
- Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will fully disclose their finances to include the annual finance report and budget to the Board of Supervisors and Township Manager of Lehigh Township by February 1 of each year.
- Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will continue to provide the Board of Supervisors and Township Manager with their quarterly activity report.”

The motion in July 2023 passed unanimously. The Township has held up their portion of the motion by adopting the fire tax and having the \$1.55 million available for the truck. The Township has not received the financials from the Fire Company by February 1st, nor have they provided the thermometer to gauge the funding of the truck. If their funding fell short, they were to take out a 2 percent loan from the State. There was also a lot of discussion pertaining to the motion on the pages of the minutes that followed the motion (attached to these minutes). Jerry Pritchard commented Cindy Miller is right. There is a short fall of 323,758. We have had three years to figure this out and here we sit with the truck ready for delivery. Cindy Miller commented the reason the Township committed to \$1.55 million was the Township had a Capital Plan in which the engine was to be the next vehicle purchased, but the Fire Company wanted to change it and move the ladder truck up as the next vehicle for replacement because they felt it was more important to replace the ladder truck first. When you move up a \$1.9 million truck in place of a \$1 million vehicle, it is a major strain on the capital plan. This motion was the only way that the Township was able to make things work. Jerry Pritchard questioned what the Fire Company was going to be bringing forward for their part of the agreement. Rick Hildebrand commented looking back through history, all the discussions with the Board at the meetings never included the contents of the motion that was made. Cindy Miller made the motion on her own and the Board agreed to it without any consultation with the Fire Company prior to that. It was almost like she was grandstanding. Cindy Miller commented it was not a matter of grandstanding; it was a matter of what the Township could afford and laying out the terms. Rick Hildebrand commented there was never a meeting regarding the conditions outlined in the motion. Cindy Miller commented the motion was made and there was a clear understanding of what needed to be done; there were eight pages of discussion going back and forth. Rick Hildebrand questioned when this information was sent to the Fire Company. Cindy Miller commented that Rick Hildebrand and several other members of the fire company were present at the meeting. Rick Hildebrand commented he may have been present at the meeting, but he is not the President of the Fire Company and doesn't make the decisions. Cindy Miller commented it was

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very clear in 2023 that the Fire Company had a position in 2023 to give money towards this. Rick Hildebrand commented that is not correct. The Fire Company was never contacted. Cindy Miller commented had she known this, she would have voted no back then and they would have had to hold off another year. Rick Hildebrand questioned if Alice Rehrig ever sent a letter to the Fire Company. Alice Rehrig commented a letter was not sent; it was the discussions from the public meeting. Janet Sheats commented she wasn't on the Board when this was discussed, but questioned why this was never reiterated after that meeting at any time, when all along there were updates on the status of the truck. Now all of a sudden payment is due; the truck is coming and here we are discussing what took place three years ago. This is the first discussion she is aware of over the past three years. Cindy Miller commented there was no reason to discuss it. The motion was made and the responsibilities were very clear. What else needed to be discussed? Jerry Pritchard commented there is a shortfall and it has to be made up, the truck is coming. He would like this to be a lesson learned for all entities to make sure they have everything all ironed out. He thinks they thought they had carte blanche in ordering the truck. If you are bringing zero to the table, that is carte blanche; here's your truck. The Township thought they were only contributing \$1.55 million. Cindy Miller commented it was very clear that the Township would not have enough money in the fund to pay for the truck; it was not carte blanche. The fire tax wasn't even implemented at that point. The Township was put into a position of ordering the truck when they really didn't have the money. Moving forward, she will not be voting to move any piece of equipment forward for purchase unless with have the money **and going forward there should also be a written agreement**. Janet Sheats commented she also thinks that when contracts are made, the Township needs to review it and something needs to be included that there is no penalty to the Fire Company or Township for early delivery. Cindy Miller commented there should be legal review. It should be written into the contract that this is when we will be accepting the truck and not penalized otherwise. We should not be held hostage by a manufacturer's deadline. The truck is coming early and now they want to charge us interest. David Hess questioned if the money would be available if the truck was delivered on time. Alice Rehrig commented the \$1.5 million is available. The balance is what requires this year's tax money. In order to have the full amount, we need to wait until the 2026 fire tax is received and it will be close. Janet Sheats commented that it seems that the funding was based on this year's fire tax. If the truck was delivered towards the end of the year, payment wouldn't be an issue. Alice Rehrig commented Cindy Miller is right in that her motion was that the Township would pay the \$1.55 million. It was based over three years of funding which would include 2026. When the motion was made, we were figuring on a lower number for the fire tax. It was estimated at \$250,000, but more than that has been received and put towards the truck. Cindy Miller questioned if the Fire Company did any fundraising towards this

apparatus. Rick Hildebrand commented the Fire Company was never notified that they needed to do fundraising for this. They were never told of that motion. In the back and forth discussions after the motion, Mike Jones specifically said order the truck. From that point forward, this office or the Township has never notified the fire company. Mike Jones noted that Rick Hildebrand was at the meeting and heard the motion. Rick Hildebrand commented he is not the President. Cindy Miller commented but he was the spokesperson for the fire company. Mike Jones commented the President usually doesn't attend the meetings. Rick Hildebrand commented he also wants to get the truth out regarding the presentation of their financial numbers. Cindy Miller eluded that the Fire Company never provided the Township with their numbers. They have asked repeatedly to have a sitdown with the Board and fully discuss the current position of the fire department. That is something they have asked for year after year because they don't want the statement put to the public that their books are not open for them to review. Mike Jones commented that is not correct. We have in the past met with the Fire Company. Cindy Miller commented she was not saying that they were hiding their finances; she was just stating the Township hasn't received them. Janet Sheats commented when the Township met with the Fire Company, the motion was never discussed. She believes that is where some of the disconnect is and why she has continually asked to bring them in so everyone is on the same page. Jerry Pritchard commented you can't use the excuse of not knowing. Every motion the Board makes has an open comment period. The reality is we have to pay for the truck. Rick Hildebrand commented if the Township is going to make a motion to require the Fire Company to do fundraising, they should have a meeting with the Fire Company ahead of time. Right now, they don't have money to contribute. They are doing fundraising to keep the lights on and trucks that they currently have in their station on the road. They just spent \$25,000 on the 30 year old pumper to keep it in service for another how many years and they don't know if it is going to make it that distance. Janet Sheats commented she was in the audience at the July 2023 meeting. She doesn't remember the motion. All she remembers from that night is that there were so many people yelling back and forth, she doesn't know how anyone took something away from that meeting. David Hess commented there were several meetings of discussion. When Phil Gogel was on the Board, he wanted to use more COVID money and it was finally agreed upon the \$200,000. Phil Gogel commented he wanted to use \$800,000 until the Fire Tax came into fruition and we would have been on target and halfway fine, but Cindy Miller is correct, there was a lot of dialog with the Fire Company and it was pretty well known about the numbers that she hammered out. He's not taking any sides. The Fire Company is valuable to the community. Jerry Pritchard is also correct. You may also need to do a resolution to transfer some funds so that there is enough money there for a short term gap so they don't have to jump through hoops and take a loan. All in all the money should be there by the end of the year, but he

thinks it may fall short by \$100,000 or so. Mike Jones questioned if there is any issue with pulling money from another fund and reimbursing that fund with the fire tax. Alice Rehrig commented she would need to keep a running total of what is owned and the reimbursement of the funds. Attorney Backenstoe commented legally there is not an issue as long as ~~you~~ you are using the money for its intended purpose. Jerry Pritchard questioned if taking the money out of the General Fund will hurt the day to day operations. Alice Rehrig commented at this time of year, it is a better time of the year because of the taxes coming in. The majority of the funds will be replaced in the next two to three months as she receives the tax reports. Jerry Pritchard commented it would be nearly impossible for the Fire Company to fundraise an additional \$323,000. Janet Sheats commented moving forward she would like to have the sitdown with the Fire Company; it can't keep getting put off and any future contracts need to be reviewed by the Township. Cindy Miller commented if the Township is going to be doing this and borrowing out of the General Fund, the next truck is getting pushed back. There is no way the Township will be able to do this in the timeframe the Fire Company wants. Rick Hildebrand commented that is why the truck was selected to be replaced at this current time. Cindy Miller commented the Fire Company wanted the next truck replaced in three years. It's not going to happen. You are lucky if it happens in four years, maybe it has to happen in five years. Mike Jones commented whatever amount of money is available in the fund when the next truck is to be replaced is what the Fire Company has to spend. Anything beyond that, they will need to figure out where the funds will come from. It either gets pushed back or they (the Fire Company) will have to figure out where the additional funds come from. Rick Hildebrand commented they spent the \$25,000 on the truck to keep it inspectable and running. They replaced the springs, the foam system, and additional work. They did it knowing there would be a stretch in replacing it. It was more important to replace the ladder truck first. Jerry Pritchard commented this will be a big hit on the fire tax. It will only leave the bare bones. Cindy Miller commented everyone needs to be aware of this. It will have an impact on the fire tax and capital plan. Janet Sheats commented next time we will need to plan the delivery better. Cindy Miller commented next time we will require written agreements. Mike Jones questioned if these types of penalties are normal for an early delivery. Rick Hildebrand commented he wasn't involved in the discussions of early, not early. What they were led to believe was because of COVID and the timing, everything was going to be delayed. Their projections were way out. He believes Alice Rehrig, the Manufacturer, and John Haggerty were in some type of conversation and he was lead to believe it is within their production and delivery timeframe. Janet Sheats commented she believes it is crappy for them to be charging interest for it coming in early. Alice Rehrig commented when the discussions regarding the purchase of the truck took place, everyone was looking at a timeframe of delivery for three or more years because of the COVID delays. The actual contract had a build and delivery

time of 905 days which is closer to 2 ½ years which put delivery into the January time frame. She did contact the manufacturer to see if delivery could be delayed until May or if delivered now, pay it over the next 2 months based on tax income. The best she is able to get was to delay the delivery from March 3 to March 11. Cindy Miller commented in the future we are not going to be on a manufacturer's timeline. This is the last time this is going to happen. When we have the money, we will let the fire company know they can order the truck. We need to do a better job of honing in on the contracts. Mike Jones commented when he heard the truck was getting delivered sooner than anticipated, he assumed they would be taking out the State loan that was available to them. Rick Hildebrand commented they did those in the past, but throughout the whole process, there was no communication. Kristin Soldridge commented she thinks there needs to be a legal contract written up so that both parties are aware of their responsibilities and that there is a timeline laid out as to when both parties will meet. Then everyone is aware of the situation. Linda Roman commented she knows the fire company has been at all these meetings and financial statements have been requested and now they are claiming ignorance. They knew upfront what they were responsible for. Katherine Mack questioned if the \$200,000 that was going to be used from the COVID money was included in the shortfall amount. The Board commented that is part of what is making the \$1.55 million. Lee Boeing commented he was on the truck committee. He doesn't believe a legal agreement with the Township is necessary; just an open line of communication. He doesn't see any frivolous stuff being done. If they are told there is money in the account, they will move forward. If not, then there needs to be a discussion. They do write in the specs that there is a daily penalty late delivery to keep the manufacturer's true to their word. John Knobloch commented the International Association of Firefighters went to Congress and complained about the price of equipment. There was a hearing regarding this and the control that Rev Group, Oshkosh, and Rosenbauer have on this market because they have been buying out the smaller companies. Part of the hearing was addressing the proprietary components that are used in the trucks. This makes the repairs difficult and costly because you have to find someone to custom make parts. Pat Ingles questioned if there was a standard about how long a firetruck should be in service. Rick Hildebrand commented the NFPA has a 15 year standard. Mike Jones commented the NFPA is not a mandatory requirement. If the fire company is within an NFPA standard, it can help with some individual's fire insurance. They also need to live close enough to the station for that benefit. Even though a truck is older than 15 years, there are other fire departments who will purchase them and continue to use them for many years after that. Janet Sheats made a motion to approve Check 29446 with the shortfall coming from the General Fund and the money replaced to General Fund from the Fire Tax Fund as the taxes come in, Alice Rehrig is to provide monthly updates to the Board, and moving forward the Fire Company and Board of Supervisors will have a meeting regarding such and any other trucks that are ordered, the contract shall come through the Township, and a change to the capital plan to

address the impact of taking this money from the fire tax. David Hess seconded the motion. Jerry Pritchard, Mike Jones, Janet Sheats, and David Hess voted aye. Cindy Miller was opposed. She felt the Board should stay with the motion from July 2023. Mike Jones agrees and since they are not loaning the money, future trucks will need to be pushed back by at least a year. All voted aye. Motion carried.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Tree removal at Indiantrail Park. Alice Rehrig received three proposals for the removal of the large tree at Indiantrail Park. The lowest proposal was from ABE Tree Service at a price of \$4,625. She verified with them that they viewed the tree because of it's height and they indicated that is a common height for trees they remove. They also provided her with a copy of their insurance. In addition, they included the removal of the two dead trees by the block building. Cindy Miller made a motion to hire ABE Tree Service for the removal of the trees at a price not to exceed \$4,625. Janet Sheats seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Sewage Enforcement Proposals. Four proposals were received for sewage enforcement services. In looking at the pricing components, Hanover Engineering and Ott Consulting had the lower pricing scale. Cindy Miller commented when you look at the individual components, the pricing from Hanover Engineering is lower. Cindy Miller made a motion to appoint Hanover Engineering as our Sewage Enforcement Officers based on the pricing that was presented. Janet Sheats seconded the motion. Jerry Pritchard raised a concern regarding placing all our business in one company. You are giving them too much control of the Township. Mike Jones commented the residents are the ones who are ultimately paying the fees. We should be looking at the lower cost. All voted aye. Motion carried.

B. Ordinance 2026-1, Replace/replacement of Chapter 79, Fireworks. This ordinance will repeal the current ordinance and replace it in its entirety. Our ordinance will not be consistent with the State laws. Cindy Miller made a motion to authorize the advertisement of Ordinance 2026-1. David Hess seconded the motion. Jerry Pritchard questioned the length of the fireworks and if that is an appropriate amount of time. Janet Sheats commented most displays are only 10 to 15 minutes because of how expensive the fireworks can get. All voted aye. Motion carried.

C. Amendments to Chapter 107-7, pertaining to Alcohol in Township Parks. The Rec Board reviewed the current ordinance and made some recommendations on changing it. They suggested removing the naming of specific parks and pavilion area, and requiring a permit if alcohol was going to be consumed in the park. Janet Sheats made a motion to authorize the proposed changes to be incorporated into an ordinance. David Hess seconded the motion. Mike Jones questioned why we would

offer a permit when you cannot rent an entire park. Cindy Miller commented the baseball teams have had alcohol in Berlinsville for a long time. Alice Rehrig commented if a team wanted to have alcohol after a game in Berlinsville, they would need to obtain a permit and sign that they are accepting responsibility for the consumption of alcohol and hold the Township harmless. If the permit holder is not on site, then people could be cited for violating the ordinance. Mike Jones commented this was originally developed to permit alcohol when someone was renting the pavilions. Does this mean a team would need to come in for a permit for each game. Cindy Miller commented she doesn't believe alcohol should be permitted at all. They are there to play baseball, not set up and drink in the parking lot. If they want to drink, go over to Berlinsville Hotel and drink there. On one hand, we are saying we have a DUI program and don't want you drinking and our police are out there monitoring DUIs, but at the same time, we are saying go ahead, sit in the parking lot and drink; we don't mind. Janet Sheats commented are reviewing the ordinance because our police department has been unable to enforce the ordinance because it is not clear cut. Jerry Pritchard commented he thinks the rules should be standard for each park. David Hess noted there are already signs in the parks that state no alcohol. He doesn't understand why the police can't enforce the current ordinance which says alcohol is permitted under the pavilions only. Jerry Pritchard noted when this was discussed at the Rec Board, one of the members stated, drinking is drinking, regardless of where you are in the park, so just remove "pavilion" from the ordinance. Janet Sheats commented she thinks something should be addressed so that baseball teams do not need to come in and obtain a permit before each game, maybe a per season price and permit. Cindy Miller questioned what an event was. If you look it up in a dictionary, it's most anything social. To her, an event is something special, like a reunion. To her, playing baseball is not an event. You are there using the field to play baseball and going home. The park is not for tailgating. Why would we allow a baseball team to sit there and drink. We would be promoting alcohol and say its okay to drink and drive and then later down the road our police can arrest them. Attorney Backenstoe commented over the years, he has seen heated debates over this topic. It really comes down to whether you want to allow alcohol or not and if you do how do you want to allow it, only in certain parks, certain areas, or under a pavilion. If you are going to allow it, he would definitely recommend it be by permit and the individual release the Township from liability. If it is an organization, they need to provide insurance. If you don't have this, the liability will come back to the Township. David Hess commented he is still not understanding how the Police cannot enforce the ordinance. It states a permit is required to have it under the pavilion. It wouldn't be allowed anywhere else. Alice Rehrig commented she believes where it gets difficult is when someone rents more than one pavilion and the people are moving around the park from pavilion to pavilion or playing horseshoes, etc. Jerry Pritchard noted there are more entities than just adult baseball teams that go through the parks. Janet Sheats commented it should be to each their own and what

they want to do. Cindy Miller commented the police are not going to go from person to person to see if they were drinking or if a permit was issued. Janet Sheats commented she believes this should be tabled and more thought given to it. Linda Roman commented there shouldn't be any drinking in the parks; it is a bad example for young people. If you want to drink, do it at home. John Knoblach questioned how a waiver is possible. If someone is drinking at a bar and crashes on their way home, they go after the bar regardless of whether something was signed. Attorney Backenstoe commented it should be reviewed with the Township insurance carrier. In his opinion, if an adult league comes in, they ought to have insurance that covers this. Rick Hildebrand commented when the Fire Company had the beer garden at the Country Fair, they took out additional insurance to hold the Township harmless. Mike Jones commented he can understand that for a large event, but not if you are having your kids party at the park. Cindy Miller questioned why not have it at your house and drink at your house. Why go to a park and drink? She doesn't understand why we have to have alcohol. Janet Sheats commented she wouldn't want the mess in her house. Monica Brown commented whatever is decided, it should be the least amount of liability to the Township. Attorney Backenstoe commented then at that point, you don't allow any alcohol. Phil Gogel questioned why this is coming up now. Cindy Miller commented the Police brought it to her attention that there is drinking in the Bryfogle parking lot, so there are issues. They wanted a consistent ordinance that they can enforce. Janet Sheats withdrew her motion and made a motion to table this. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

- D. Resolution 2026-9, Township Open Space Preservation Program. Cindy Miller had prepared this resolution after being contacted by residents and a Board member so that this matter is not continually discussed at meetings. Attorney Backenstoe reviewed the resolution from a legal perspective and it is fine. She then made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-9. David Hess seconded the motion. Jerry Pritchard commented a majority of the time that this is brought up, it is during public comment. The public has the right to speak. This is like telling them they are not allow to speak. Cindy Miller commented every meeting we are spending 45 minutes on this. Mike Jones questioned the seven year period that is listed in the resolution. The Board can possibly change in two years. How can you curtail something like this for seven years. Attorney Backenstoe commented he looked at the resolution. You can pass a resolution that says this, but it is not enforceable. If this Board changes it's mind in a week, you can pass another resolution and reverse this. You can't stop the public comment and another board can also repeal this. Mike Jones questioned why do it if it can be repealed that quickly and is unenforceable. Jerry Pritchard is right, this is coming up under public comment. Cindy Miller commented she does not want to sit here meeting after meeting for 45 minutes listening to the same thing each meeting. It's time to move on. David Hess commented the problem comes in when

the Board starts engaging in the public comment and keeps on going back and forth. Janet Sheats commented the meetings get drug out because one person says something and then the next person says the same thing a different way. Cindy Miller is not wrong with the way things keep dragging on. Everyone keeps speaking about things that are not pertinent to the business meeting that the Board is having. People just keep rambling on. Although she agrees with things dragging on, she can't agree with adopting the resolution. Cindy Miller commented she wrote it to make a statement. We really need to stick to our agendas and hone in on things. We have important topics that need to be discussed and gotten through. Janet Sheats commented as a Board they need to do better to control what is taking place. Cindy Miller commented eventually there will be a podium with a microphone and people will have to come forward to speak. That will help bring more order to the meetings and everyone can hear what is being said. Phil Gogel commented the resolution doesn't appear to prohibit someone from speaking; it is just stating it will not be on the agenda. The resolution can be repealed at any time. It may help keep a lid on things because people are not reading their material and end up having a debate when you should already have questions prepared. Jerry Pritchard commented it seems like we are picking and choosing which topics we want people to discuss. Cindy Miller and David Hess voted aye. Janet Sheats, Jerry Pritchard, and Mike Jones voted nay. Motion did not carry.

- E. Letter from County Executive regarding Detention Centers. Cindy Miller noted all the Supervisors received a letter from the County Executive regarding her personal feeling on these detention centers coming into municipalities. She is requesting that if the letter is supported, we should sign onto it. It seems to be a personal political letter that she, in her opinion, doesn't think should have gone out to the municipalities and should not be telling property owners what to do with their properties because of a personal political issue. Mike Jones commented he only agrees with the concerns regarding the taxes and if the size is appropriate for the amount of people who will be there. Cindy Miller commented no one really knows how the tax structure will work. If there is a property transfer, there most likely will be a transfer tax. It may then go to non-profit or whatever the case may be. It really comes down to zoning. If a municipality has zoning, that will dictate what is or isn't permitted. The County does not have any jurisdiction on a Township's zoning. The Board agreed that they shouldn't be signing onto this.
- F. Community Outreach Program. Janet Sheats questioned what would be required to create a subgroup to establish a community outreach program. Attorney Backenstoe commented it would depend upon what the mission of the program is. Janet Sheats commented it would be resources for people who could reach out to this committee and they could go out and evaluate what the needs are then they could contact the different outreach programs, any other referrals or the volunteers of the program

could choose to rectify a situation. Attorney Backenstoe commented the Board of Supervisors could create a committee to look into this, do research, and provide opinions; however, a committee cannot be created that would fund things because you cannot use Township funds on private property. A Township committee can be created to meet, discuss, and give ideas to people. A group of people could also create a 501.3.c that could raise and seek funds to have funds available to assist people in need. It would need to be a separate entity and cannot cross to the Township committee. David Hess questioned if a committee went out and reviewed a situation and didn't follow up with the needed help and something happened, can they or their family members come back and place a liability on the Township. Attorney Backenstoe commented a Township committee would not be able to go out and inspect properties. The Township committee would need to meet with people at the Township. If people want to volunteer, provide funding, or labor, they need to form a 501.c.3.

Phil Gogel questioned if there was a protocol for emergency responders to follow outlining who can be contacted regarding certain situation. Mike Jones commented there are resources in place. Mike Jones commented in the case of the situation a few weeks ago, the individuals didn't either want the assistance or follow through with the assistance.

G. 2025 Financial Reports. In reviewing the 2025 year end financials, the following questions were raised:

Tax Collector Supplies increased, is there an explanation. Answer: The printing costs and postage increased.

Legal—Labor Related. Why was it so high this year? Answer: There were personnel issues.

Engineering Services. Was this over budget because of them covering for the Zoning Officer? Answer: No, Alice Rehrig had looked at this earlier. There were quite a few grading plan reviews that were done. The costs of the review need to be compared to fees collected to see if it is a timing issue or something else requiring attention. Her opinion is that some of the plans that have been coming have not been done in accordance with the ordinance creating extra time and review expenses.

Police Salary/Overtime balanced. It was noticed that the overtime exceeded the budget; however, the regular time came in under budget, balancing things out.

Police Maintenance Agreements. Was there a lot of technology last year causing the maintenance agreements to be higher? Answer: Their officer computers, server, and

mobile data terminals were updated. Some of the expenses associated with the update crossed into the maintenance agreements because it can be difficult to determine what is an expense of the upgrade and what is the result of an issue.

Capital Purchases. These expenses were over budget. The overage was a result of camera purchased through grants that carried over from 2024

Public Works Supplies. This category was way over, do we know why? Answer: Additional research into the details will need to be investigated.

Cleaning of Street and Repairs to Tool and Machinery. Are we following a maintenance plan? The costs seem to be routinely higher than expected. Answer: A maintenance plan is followed. There were hydraulic hoses involved with either the loader or backhoe. It wasn't normal maintenance. The leaf vac expenses required a relining of the machine which was missed when the budget was done. The relining needs to be done every five or six years.

Recreation Land Fee Purchases. What were these expenses? Answer: The repairs to the wall and a down payment on the additional gates

Federal Program Expense. Is this the Public Works Building? Answer: No, these are the expenses associated with the DUI program that get reimbursed.

Historical Society. It was noted that we are contributing \$2,500 towards them, but they are not doing anything for the 250th Anniversary. It is essentially equating to paying for the heat for the building.

Police Department Phone Charges. What causes the charges to be as high as what they are? Answer: It is the combination of all the cellular charges and the monthly phone charges.

What was the total balance of recreation funds? Answer: There is a total of \$221,000 with \$71,000 of that coming from the Rec Land Fees paid by developers.

- H. Manager's Report. Alice Rehrig did additional research regarding changing email providers. There is a way to preserve Board member's emails, but it would be in a different location than where they are accessing them now, and not as easy to access them. **Cindy Miller commented the Board of Supervisors need access to all of their prior emails.** It probably would be best to leave the emails where they are and just remove the archiving feature and it will still save \$1,500.

- I. Solicitor's Report. Attorney Backenstoe had nothing specific to report. He is working with Roxann Colfer to look at selected sections of the property maintenance code which may be helpful without adopting the entire thing.
- VI. PUBLIC COMMENT. Rick Hildebrand noted the Fire Company is up to 86 calls for the year and 20 of them have been for house fires. One of the fires was the result of lithium batteries in the garage. Residents are reminded to not leave them on unattended on charge and if possible isolate them and keep them away from other items.

Jerry Pritchard questioned what the cause was of the fire on Mangrove Drive. Rick Hildebrand commented it is undetermined.

Michele Dotta questioned if resolutions are available to the public prior to the Board voting on them so they can ask questions, Mike Jones commented they are not public until it comes to the Board. Based on the discussions, it seems like the public is being blamed for the length of meetings and a resolution was put together to stifle the public's voice. She feels like her voice was taken away when the Board chose not to move forward with placing open space on the ballot. The Board is representing the people, but they don't want to listen to what the people say. It is not a matter of I; it is all of us together.

Katherine Mack is also upset that the Board took the public's right to vote on the open space referendum away. Our democracy is based on voting and letting people have a voice. She doesn't believe the Supervisors should be an obstacle to the democratic process. She is disappointed that a vote was not considered on the matter. It is a fundamental process of our government. Voting empowers citizens and ensures representation. The Board has the power to make sure the citizens are represented. She believes the Board should trust the people who voted to trust them. There are a lot of people who wanted the opportunity to vote for this, but it was taken away.

Cindy Miller reiterated the law pertaining to open space because we are constantly hearing how the people's voice was taken away to vote. An amendment to Act of January 19, 1968 (1967 P.L.992, No.442), Preserving Land for Open Air Space is what allowed that local government may adopt the program. This states a local government unit, excluding counties and county authorities *may*, not shall, by ordinance... This means that the Board first decides whether they even want to move it forward as an issue. If the Board decides they want to move it forward, then at that point, they follow the process that was previously outlined by Attorney Backenstoe, which would create the referendum on the ballot. It does not happen unless the Board decides they want to move it forward.

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Jerry Pritchard commented not everything is permitted to go on the ballot. Not everything is ballot worthy. The Board was voted in place to make the decisions. Something of this magnitude is ballot worthy. He has had people tell him he was voted to make the decisions, but he is a believer in the ballot box. He is not saying he is for or against the program. He doesn't understand how we can be prodemocracy and not let people speak on something of this magnitude.

David Hess commented his vote is what he believes the majority of the people who put him into the position want. The majority of the people he has spoken with were not in favor of this.

Cindy Miller commented she also had the majority of the people who came to her not in favor of the program. It's not a personal agenda; she has nothing to gain or lose from this. She is here to represent the people. If the majority of the people are telling her they do not agree with this, that is how she will vote at the meeting. The law allows her to make the decision as a supervisor as to whether or not it should be moved forward to go to an ordinance as a referendum. Whether or not to move it forward is where it starts. They are elected to decide if this is something that should be moved forward for the community. Is it in the best interest of the entire community, not just 10 or 50 people. This is why she voted the way she did.

Katherine Mack commented the Board has a lot of power; they have the ability to raise taxes. All the citizens can do is come to the meeting and voice their opinion. Where the residents have their power is at the ballot box.

Mike Jones commented this tax will generate just shy of \$1million per year. Within five years, there will be minimally \$5 million that will just sit there. What happens if there are no properties to buy? You can use the money for one thing and one thing only. If it is approved, it has to be in place for five years before it can go back to the ballot box to be removed.

Cindy Miller commented the people voted the Board in. They need to trust the Board to make the right decision.

Janet Sheats commented she has a hard time with that decision when taking the 14 year olds who are working into consideration. Where is their voice?

Josh Lorah commented he hates to see the building take place, but doesn't agree with placing a tax for this on the residents. He doesn't see that there are that many properties in the Township that would qualify. Most of the large farms have already been preserved. Mike Jones commented he believes they would be looking at properties that are 10 acres in size and they wouldn't necessarily have to be a farm. Cindy Miller commented we

have zoning which doesn't allow development on steep slopes or wetlands. Why would we as a Township pay to put that land into this program when it doesn't qualify to be developed? Josh Lorah commented he fully supports farmland preservation but feels it should be left at the County and State level rather than adding an additional tax to the residents. If residents want to preserve land, there is a program available. You can't force someone to do this, so if they want to develop houses, they will. Janet Sheats commented people also need to realize that there needs to be enough growth to sustain the expenses or taxes will need to go up.

Marc Kercksmar commented the last set of minutes is an example of how both sides do not understand each other and the preservation should not just be thrown on the ballot. There is not enough information to make an educated vote at the ballot box. It also comes back to the voter. If you are under 18 and working, you can't vote so you are paying for it and can't vote on it. If you are retired and not working, you can vote on it, but you are not paying for it. There should be a fair way for everyone to be represented if it goes to the ballot.

Cindy Miller commented Ag security was created to preserve farmland, productive farmland. It wasn't created for people to get paid for their development rights for 10 acres. It wasn't created for people to kind of get rich by putting their properties into preservation. It was for active farming.

Janet Sheats commented her understanding of the difference between a local program and a County program is that there are certain properties that the County will not take because they have more stringent rules and require more acres. Cindy Miller commented the question is does the Township really want to do this.

Zach Szoke commented the Board is supposed to represent all the people of the Township, not just the ones they talk to. There are a lot of people who are in support of a local program.

Zach Szoke questioned how he could obtain a copy of the resolution. Attorney Backenstoe commented since it was discussed at a public meeting, it can be obtained by a right to know request.

Zach Szoke commented he is taking exception to the minutes from January 27, 2026. He specifically asked if his father's comment and the comment made by Cindy Miller's follow up comments were in the minutes and was told they were, but they are not. Right after Tom Szoke stated "Shame on you", Cindy Miller stated, then "shame on us" and that is not in the minutes. Cindy Miller commented she doesn't recall saying that. Zach Szoke commented it is important that they be included because the minutes as stated do not show the nastiness that was displayed. Attorney Backenstoe commented the minutes

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are supposed to capture the substance of comments; they are not transcripts or word or word dialect. The law and the solicitor seminars he attends, as well as PSATS, recommend that the minutes not be comprehensive. The minutes should reflect the substance of the comments and the vote. That is all that is required to be in the minutes. If the Board wants to have more detailed minutes, that is up to them. Zach Szoke commented he understands that, but he specifically asked if they were in and was told that they were. Cindy Miller commented she doesn't remember saying it, but if she did, she did. If the Board wants to add it to the minutes, that's fine. Janet Sheats and Mike Jones commented they must have gotten confused and said it was in there when they looked at the minutes and saw that "shame on you" was in the minutes. Zach Szoke commented he would like the minutes reconciled and amended that the comment was made. The Board did not specifically recall that Cindy Miller made that statement and the tapes are erased after the minutes are approved. Zach Szoke commented there was a lot of nasty sentiment that was made during the meeting and everyone needs to be aware of that and the statements do not show that.

Zach Szoke provided the Board with a listing of all the parcels that could qualify for a local preservation program. There are 302 active parcels that could qualify for preservation that are over 10 acres in size and not steep slopes or wetlands. These are the general standards that most municipalities in Northampton County use.

Mike Jones questioned what the Act 515 notation was. Attorney Backenstoe commented Act 515 was the original designation for farming programs. The State eventually developed the Act 319 program. When someone put their land into Act 515 and chose to develop it, they needed to pay rollback taxes of five years. Act 319 has a rollback period of seven years. New properties going into the program are enrolled into Act 319. Zach Szoke noted that Act 515 and Act 319 are tax reduction programs, not preservation programs. If someone pays the rollback taxes, the property can be developed.

Mike Jones questioned how many of these properties tried to be preserved and we denied. Zach Szoke commented he is not certain, but the County program is just for farmland. Right now, he is only aware of John Lack's property on Cedar Drive.

Mike Jones commented there was something mentioned a few meetings ago about annexing. Zach Szoke commented if someone owns two five acre parcels next to each other, they could put both into preservation since it totals 10 acres. This type of situation is not included in the list provided to the Board.

Cindy Miller commented you can also transfer development rights. Zach Szoke commented if someone owns two parcels, they can transfer the development rights from Parcel A to Parcel B for a higher density development and Parcel A would be preserved.

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Zach Szoke asked each individual Board member what their reasoning was to not authorize the advertisement of the ordinance to get preservation on the ballot. Mike Jones commented the motion will not **pass and he does not like the idea of the money sitting in an account and then running out of land to purchase.** Jerry Pritchard commented he believes that some of the Board is reserved because the public doesn't have enough information. He is for the ballot box. Janet Sheats doesn't like being pushed into a corner. She has previously stated her opinion **and also that 14 year olds will have to pay the tax.** David Hess commented he was voted into office to do what he thinks is right for the Township. This is a tax increase to the residents and doesn't agree with tax increases of any kind. Cindy Miller commented she previously stated her opinion.

- VII. ADJOURN. Janet Sheats made a motion to adjourn. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

have two principal uses on one property which is where this lies. A farm is a principal use and a principal solar energy facility is a principal use; you can't have dual uses. What was explained at Planning Commission was that they were definitely going to entertain it; it wasn't going off the radar, but they want to make sure to do it the right way. They don't want to jump in feet first and make a decision and then find out when the start reviewing ordinances, they have to change something because they jumped into this too quickly. Michele Cassale commented she does have a solar company interested in doing something with her farm and another member of the community does as well. Of the 400 acres between them, they are only proposing to use about 50 acres. They have the ability to not do impervious surface by keeping the crops underneath them and having the supplemental income to help her keep her farm. The problem is the way the ordinance is written, she can't do the solar. Mike Jones commented he doesn't agree that there would not be stormwater issues. Phil Gogel commented a lot of the solar companies are telling people they don't need to go through the stormwater regulations or that the panels are not hazardous waste, but that is not the case. A solar farm would still need to go through all the environmental regulations as a regular development. People really need to think about what they are going to do and what their return will be because these companies will try to pull the wool over their eyes if they have the chance. Mike Jones commented regardless of whether or not the ordinance is changed, the dual use still is not permitted.

- F. Fire Company. Rick Hildebrand reported there were 147 calls for the past quarter. 63 of them were accident and EMS calls. 84 were fire calls. There were 34 agency assists and 10 occasions where they received aid. These numbers are a reflection of the manpower that we have for our community. Typically, neighboring municipalities have mutual aid responding for every call; Lehigh Township only receives mutual aid for structure fires and dwelling fires because of the depth of their personnel and are able to handle all the other incidents without additional resources. There were 19 instances where there were two or more calls at once. EMS response times to scene are typically shorter than to other calls because they have people equipped with medical supplies for QRS calls and will go directly to scene.

The Fire Company was also awarded a Federal Grant in the amount of \$34,000 for Life/Safety for firefighters. Escape bags will be purchased for the firefighters with this funding. The escape bags will be hooked onto their gear and will allow a firefighter to escape out of a window by jamming a tool into a wall or object and using the rope to repel down.

- Ladder truck purchase/replacement. Cindy Miller commented after the Board's meeting with the Fire Department's leadership and firefighters, she wants to make a motion. It was made very clear that not all citizens are paying for fire protection

due to the very low return of 25% on the subscription mailing. The large apparatus is rising and very costly in the millions of dollars. The motion she is making is as follows:

Lehigh Township will authorize the purchase of the ladder truck with these conditions:

- Lehigh Township will commit at this time \$1,550,000 for the ladder truck.
- Lehigh Township will use \$600,000 in the capital fund allocated for large fire apparatus.
- Lehigh Township will use up to \$200,000 of the American Rescue Plan Act money towards the ladder truck, if necessary.
- Lehigh Township will research, develop and pass a fire tax ordinance to be implemented January 1, 2024. Details of the ordinance will follow. The Board will work on that.
- Lehigh Township will keep the large fire apparatus in the capital plan, but use the fire tax money to pay for the apparatus.
- The ladder truck will be paid in full the 3rd year as per the proposal showing 906 days.
- The next large piece of fire apparatus will be purchased minimally in three years after the total acquisition of the ladder truck.
- The Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will order the chassis to the ladder truck by July 31, 2023.
- Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will re-evaluate the specifications to determine the needs versus wants of the ladder truck just to see if the cost can come down from where it is.
- The Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will start a capital campaign for the balance of the money. A physical thermometer billboard will be displayed along Route 248 that shows the dollar value obtained for the Truck to include the Township money when allocated by year to see the growth in the campaign because we have \$1,550,000 so we are short.

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- An online means to raise money will be provided by the Fire Company. Whether it be direct to the fire company, GiveSendGo or GoFundMe. This money will be used only for the purchase of the ladder truck.
- Should the capital campaign for the ladder truck come up short, the Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will take out a 2% state loan for the balance of what is due.
- Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will place the current ladder truck for sale within 60 days from receipt of the new ladder truck. The proceeds from the sale will be used toward the payment of the new ladder truck. If the proceeds are not needed for the new ladder truck purchase, the money will be put into the fire tax account and used to purchase the next new large fire apparatus.
- Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will fully disclose their finances to include the annual finance report and budget to the Board of Supervisors and Township Manager of Lehigh Township by February 1 of each year.
- Lehigh Township Volunteer Fire Company will continue to provide the Board of Supervisors and Township Manager with their quarterly activity report.

David Hess seconded the motion. Jerry Pritchard questioned if the \$1.5 million that is being offered to the Fire Company will need to be generated over a period of time. Cindy Miller commented it would be generated over three years. \$600,000 would come from the capital fund, up to \$200,000 from the COVID relief funds, and the balance would come from income generated from a fire tax which is estimated to be minimally \$250,000 per year. Jerry Pritchard questioned how we know what fire tax we would be applying to this when we don't have a tax. Cindy Miller commented she is basing her numbers off of the amount of money that is currently being set aside for the fire company. Cindy Miller commented the final details of the fire tax will need to be worked out when the Board starts working on the fire tax ordinance. Phil Gogel questioned what the Township was going to be doing with the remaining \$675,000 of the COVID relief money. Cindy Miller commented there is a whole list of projects that were presented to the Board. Phil Gogel questioned which of those were committed. Cindy Miller commented she is not depleting the entire account for the firetruck. The money needs to be used for the entire community for other things. Phil Gogel commented it seems like there are a lot of hooks included in the motion. Cindy Miller commented it is not a lot of hooks. We are providing the Fire Company with \$1.5 million. Jerry Pritchard commented once the fire tax is implemented, it stays. We wouldn't roll it back. Mike Jones commented the

Board could roll it back, but generally, it would stay. Rick Hildebrand commented he is speaking without having a monthly meeting to bring any other information back. His question is about putting the sign in the yard. Cindy Miller commented it would be a capital campaign where you would show how much money is coming in so the community knows. If you do a capital campaign, people from the community would be sending money in for the truck. Her idea with the visual is to get the point across to the community that we are trying to raise \$1.8 million for the truck. It will be in front of people all the time. Only 25 percent of the community is subscribing to the Fire Company. With a capital campaign being done on-line, people can send money in and it only goes towards the truck. As the dollars go up, we can keep marking off the visual so people can see where we are in setting the goal of the funding for the truck. We want the community to visually see this, that the money is coming in rather than just saying we need this. Rick Hildebrand commented the pre-payment of the chassis is \$614,968. Will this be an issue with what is in the truck fund? Mike Jones commented it is understood that the balance would come from the fund. Rick Hildebrand wanted to let the community know that the tax fund from the Township do not change hands with the Fire Company. They take no tax money. The tax money is invested into equipment and apparatus for the community which is the community's equipment; they house it. Their fundraising efforts go to raising funds to house, repair, maintain the building, the apparatus, and the fire equipment. Currently in the last five years, they have had \$250,000 in apparatus repairs. That is coming from money that does not come from taxes. That comes out of the money they raise with their mailers and fundraisers at the firehouse. Above and beyond that, they have to maintain the property and everything that goes on in it. That has been millions of dollars in spending over the past five years of taking care of the property, the electric, and everything else that goes on up there. He is slightly concerned if they put another fundraiser out there that they have to organize, host, and accept money for from the community. Cindy Miller commented she is suggesting it be an on-line fundraiser. Rick Hildebrand commented they would need to research this with the regulations associated with small games of chance. Cindy Miller commented that as a Township, they cannot do that. We cannot apply for any grants because once the contract is signed, grants are out. He wants everyone to understand that they have an open book policy with the Township. Anything that they raise or have in their books has been disclosed to the community for the Supervisors at all times. They have never said, no we are not going to show you something because it is private information. They turn over audits. They have to be audited because they raise funds as a charitable organization. Their audits are getting done; there are checks and balances. They disclose all the information to the community. Mike Jones commented the motion is not saying that the fire company doesn't do that. By law, if there is a fire tax, it has to be done that way. The finances do need to be

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turned over. Rick Hildebrand commented if they are not receiving tax funds, they would not be subject to that audit. They are not receiving tax funds. Cindy Miller commented the Township is allocating money for equipment that comes from tax funds. Rick Hildebrand commented in other communities, the community will make donations to the Fire Company and give them money blindly. Lehigh Township Fire Company has never done that. Whenever they needed something, they would provide a receipt to the Township. There never is community money at the firehouse as far as tax funds. Mike Jones commented the Township pays for the large equipment, fuel, and insurances. Everything else needed at the Fire Company is paid for by them. Doug Vaughn commented his understanding of the motion is that the Fire Company will need to raise the balance of the funds between the \$1.5 million and the cost of the truck. Mike Jones commented there may be more than the \$1.5 million by the time the truck is delivered depending upon how the fire tax holds out. Cindy Miller commented her estimate is conservative based on the funding that is currently provided. Rick Hildebrand commented that money is not raised for the Fire Company. The money is put in an account and the Township manages where the money goes. Cindy Miller noted that when the Fire Company presents an invoice and says they need this, they get the money. Rick Hildebrand commented he's not disagreeing. He just wants everyone to understand there is a clear separation between the Fire Department and the tax funds until a tangible item is purchased. They do not handle anyone's money other than the donations made at Fire Company. Cindy Miller commented the Township does not release any funds until they are presented with an invoice. Once they have an invoice, they release the funds. The fire tax would work the same way. That is how other municipalities handle it as well. The money is allocated for the Fire Company and it doesn't get touched except for fire protection. There is a separate account. Ann Breidenback questioned if they will have to justify to the Board that they want a particular piece of equipment. It was made pretty clear that this equipment is needed. Cindy Miller commented when she is referring to a want versus a need, she is asking them to go through the specs again and determine if there is a way to cut costs and determine if there is something in the specs that is a want rather than a need. They would be asked to do this for each piece of apparatus. Paul Nikisher commented he likes the idea that there is a budget, but just because there is money in a budget doesn't mean it needs to be spent. He also questioned if money will be set aside as it was in the past with the implementation of a fire tax. Cindy Miller commented that the money that was previously set aside would come off the books and now be a fire tax. Mike Jones commented the millage that is set for the fire tax will hopefully be enough to cover things. In the next few years, it should level off. In a 10 year span, the Township was asked to pay for \$4 million in equipment. Once we get through this rough patch, things should even out and as more people come into the Township, the funds will increase. Paul Nikisher

commented in the interest of fairness, everyone will be contributing with a fire tax. It is our community and he applauds the time and efforts the firefighters put in. Cindy Miller commented the Fire Company needs newer equipment and the idea is that we will be buying the equipment sooner and basically getting caught up and with it being in the capital plan we can keep it going moving forward. Rick Hildebrand commented with regard to revisiting the specs, they have a proposal that was more than a year in the making. It is a finite item. It is either sign it or scrap it. If they try to make changes to it, they will wind up going through reengineering because they will have to redesign the electric, plumbing, and some other things. When they did this proposal, they put technology into it to allow for compressed air foam which is a firefighting technology. They have been using Class A foam to combat fires since 1998. This is the next generation which incorporates compressed air into it to make a substance similar to shaving cream to apply to the outside of structures. With this technology, there is a cost of \$100,000; however, it reduces the amount of water than has to be carried on the truck, reduces the amount of water that needs to be applied to the fire, reduces the weight of the fire hoses. Cindy Miller commented she is not asking them to eliminate something that is needed. She is saying we are short the \$300,000. If the Fire Company can look through the specs and see if there is anything that can be taken out, then that is less we need to come up with in the capital campaign. Daryl Hassler commented you may be able to find nickel and dime type of things, but anything significant will require reengineering. Cindy Miller commented she didn't know what could or couldn't be done based on what she read. It was previously discussed about the painting of the truck red, white, and blue. Is this a want or a need? She doesn't know what it adds to the price. Daryl Hassler commented a lot of those things they don't know either. There is not an ala carte list that shows up with the proposal. It is not itemized. Rick Hildebrand commented on the 20th of this month, they will be signing a contract for a \$1.83 million firetruck with only \$1.5 million available. Mike Jones commented the numbers are based on the current funding the Township puts towards a truck. When the Board looks at the fire tax, that number can change. Cindy Miller commented she based her numbers on what can be committed to today because we don't know. Rick Hildebrand commented he thinks whomever will be signing the paper will be nervous knowing that there is a shortage of funding. He would think that the community would be the ones responsible for paying for their equipment. It keeps on being stated that the money is being given to the Fire Company. They may get to utilize it, but this is a community investment. Cindy Miller commented she believes this is going in the direction where the Township takes out the loan, but the Township won't have the money because we are already depleting the fire tax to get to the \$1.550 million. Rick Hildebrand commented this is an investment for the community and should be by the community. They are the stewards of the equipment and they maintain it and

operate it for free. It won't be that way for years down the road and it will not be a discussion that anyone wants to have, but it is coming. You look at the age of what is at the Fire Company and the turnover that is coming, that is why they use the technology they spoke about to reduce the strain on the firefighters, the work and labor that goes into it and to have a tactical advantage on the fire with that technology. He wants to make sure that everyone understands that they are going to try to solicit people driving by who are already the ones who are helping them keep the lights on, heat in the garage, maintain the apparatus because there is zero maintenance that gets done on the apparatus by the Township. It is all on the fire house and that is where all there fundraising efforts go. Now, above and beyond that, they potentially will have a \$350,000 shortfall that doesn't come from the community, but on the backs of the firefighters again. Cindy Miller commented she understands that, but the other option is it will take four years to get the funding and then the equipment prices go up. It is a vicious cycle. Rick Hildebrand commented if they don't sign by the 20th, the price will go up by \$86,000. Cindy Miller questioned what the alternative would be. Rick Hildebrand commented we need a properly funded fire tax that can account for these issues. Mike Jones commented if the Board wouldn't do a fire tax, there would still be a shortfall. John Haggerty questioned who would pay for the 2% state loan, the fire house or the community? Phil Gogel commented when it was discussed a few weeks ago, he wanted the Township to service the loan, but he doesn't think that is part of this discussion. Cindy Miller commented that is what she is getting at, how will the Township pay for that if there isn't enough money? Phil Gogel commented the fire company would be taking out the loan and buying time until the funding from the fire tax comes in. The fire tax would service the loan. Cindy Miller questioned how money would be saved up for the next truck that is being discussed in three years. Phil Gogel commented you would need to adjust the numbers in your fire tax. Rick Hildebrand commented if the Board is looking at \$1 million for the engine, it will most likely be \$1.5 by the time it gets here. Rick Hildebrand also commented the motion is addressing large fire apparatus. Is there any apparatus that is excluded from the fire tax? Cindy Miller commented they are not getting into the details of the fire tax tonight, but most fire taxes cover large apparatus—the rescue, engine, tanker, ladder. The Board will have to define what is included in the ordinance. Rick Hildebrand commented the truck they just received on a grant, which is a mini-pumper came in at \$435,000. He doesn't consider that to be small. Even if they do a pickup truck with a utility body like the last one which was \$150,000, the current price of that will probably be close to \$200,000. These are numbers that could potentially by motion be put back onto the fire house. Mike Jones commented the motion is to allow the fire company to sign the paperwork for the truck and that the Township will work on a fire tax. Nothing is set in stone on the fire tax. What will or won't be included is not known at this time. Rick Hildebrand commented

there is still a \$300,000 short fall. Cindy Miller commented that is what the Township has been saying for the past several meetings. We have to figure out how to get and it we have three years to get it. Rick Hildebrand commented if you set the tax appropriately, enough money could be generated. David Hess commented the fire tax could go anywhere from 1 mill to 1.5 mills to 2 mills. They don't know yet. Doug Vaughn questioned if it wouldn't be better for the community, instead of taking out a loan, the additional funding came out of the COVID relief money that is not yet committed. Mike Jones commented there are still projects that the Township needs to complete. Unfortunately, there is not enough money to go around. Mike Matseur commented items of life/safety should take precedence and the other items put on the back burner. Mike Jones commented the comments about us no longer being safe need to stop. We are not unsafe. The fire company is getting the truck that they want. Mike Matseur commented what Mr. Vaughn is asking the Board to do is to use the COVID money that is supposedly earmarked for a ballfield or something and use it for the cost that they are bringing to the Board that is associated with life/safety. There is cash laying around that can be used to put towards that cost. Jerry Pritchard commented the money is not going towards a ballfield. There are designated projects that need to be completed. Cindy Miller commented a new fueling station is needed; that is something that is being planned for the COVID money. It will cost over \$100,000. That is used to fuel the fire trucks also; it needs to get done. Mike Matseur commented the fuel system can be delayed for a year; give the Fire Company gas cards and they can go to Turkey Hill for fuel. The idea is that when a life safety issue comes up, it supersedes other issues and they can be put on the back burner for the money to be allocated for the truck right now. Mike Jones commented the money is not needed today for the truck. Mike Matseur commented that there is still a shortfall. Mike Jones commented whether or not there will be a shortfall has not yet been determined. The numbers right now are based on what currently is being given to the Fire Company. We don't know what a fire tax will generate. The Board is looking for ways of saving money. There are things included in the truck that are not needed such as the three colors and the upholstered seats with the Fire Company logo. Things that are not needed for life saving, but the Fire Company is still getting the truck they need to save the Township. Mike Matseur commented it is frustrating being a member of the Fire Company and having people say let them fundraise for it. They give so much of their time to the community, yet people say, let them fundraise. If you counted up the number of personnel hours that go into the training, upkeep, maintenance, fundraising, preparing for the events, the staffing of the events, and now you are expecting them to give even more of their time to fundraise when you can just set a high bar with a high fire tax and get the money that that need. What is the maximum fire tax? Mike Jones commented it is three mills. You would want the Township to tax everyone three mills? Mr. Matseur

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commented that would be beautiful. It would get them what they need, but is the Board in favor of that? Mike Jones commented absolutely not. People can understand a one mill tax, but there is no way they would understand a three mill tax. David Hess commented he does believe it will need to be more than one mill. Mr. Matseur commented that as time goes on, there will be less volunteers and it will make it so much harder to fundraise and raise money. They will be going down this road again and coming back to the Board saying they need more of a fire tax because there is a short fall. He is asking the Board to consider two or three mills and they won't have to touch it again. The Board is also saying it will be just for a truck when a lot of their issues come into play with maintenance and keeping the trucks on the road and having to buy equipment. Sometimes they don't get a grant and need to replace things because they have life spans. There never could be too much money in there. Mike Jones commented the fire tax is not an open checkbook. It is for things that the Fire Company needs. Rick Hildebrand commented they need an apparatus replacement plan, maybe a maintenance plan because it is expensive, but at the end of the day they need a funding source that is enough to handle the replacement of the apparatus. The police do not have coin tosses to buy bullets, the road crew does not have coin tosses or on-line fundraisers to buy salt for the road. Why do they need to have fundraisers to buy the firetruck to put someone's house out? This is becoming absurd with the amount of stuff that is being placed on them because if you are not paying attention to SR 60 and where the State is going with volunteer fire departments, you are missing a boatload of information. The \$2 million a year police department budget which is primarily people's paychecks would have to double or triple to pay for a fire department staff. That is \$4 to \$6 million in operational costs to have a funded fire department with paid firefighters. The volunteer service is collapsing. Mike Jones commented the Township is not saying that it will not get the money for the truck. The fire tax has not been set up. If it ever gets to the point of a paid department, we will have to deal with it. It will be statewide at that time, not just in Lehigh Township. Rick Hildebrand commented if the motion will allow them to move forward with the truck and there are no additional questions, he would say move forward. Phil Gogel commented the issue he has is with the \$375,000 that is at the end where they will be on the hook for it. Cindy Miller commented we don't know that; once everything is set up, the money may be there. Phil Gogel questioned if the motion could be amended that if the funding is there, they would be reimbursed for that. Mike Jones commented the motion was that there would be a minimum of \$1.55 million. Depending on what comes in on the fire tax, there could be more money available. Phil Gogel commented the motion has them taking out the loan, but there is no means for them to be reimbursed for that. Cindy Miller commented she doesn't know where the reimbursement would come because you would be saving for the next vehicle. Doug Vaughn commented he doesn't believe it is

appropriate to ask someone to sign their name for a loan knowing they don't have any way to pay it back. Mike Jones commented they are not required to take the loan right now. The motion says there will be at least \$1.55 million available and if necessary, they would get the 2 percent loan. Phil Gogel commented when the loan was previously discussed, the Township was going to service the loan, but that is not part of the motion. Ann Breidenback commented you are saying they can purchase the equipment, but if there is a shortfall, they must raise the money. There is a stipulation that the capital campaign has to have an on-line presence, yet the on-line fundraisers get a kickback so you are asking them to work twice as hard to get the money. Can't the Township squeak out some of the \$350,000 and give them some peace of mind that they don't have to break their backs to fundraise and maybe as a community we can come together. We have the firefighters; we should treasure them. We shouldn't be asking them to fundraise for it. John Haggerty commented 50 people shouldn't have to figure out how to protect 11,000 people and go raise money to do it. Phil Gogel commented it is the Township's job to figure out the money and their job is to ask for the equipment. Linda Roman commented they may want to consider asking the large developers to donate towards the equipment. They may want to donate towards the community. Everyone is worried about the threat of a fire. They are not the only fire company who responds to a fire and this is not the only piece of equipment that comes to a fire. They all help each other. She is one of the people who live on a fixed income and everyone else wants to raise her taxes. People need this and people need that, but there are people who have to worry about needing medication or if they can buy food. They live here too. A resident and member of the Fire Company commented he is glad to hear that the Board is finally in agreement to make a commitment to addressing a fire tax. It is long over due. It would be his suggestion to make a commitment to a five year replacement program so that you buy a piece of apparatus every five years and have the four large pieces of apparatus replaced every 20 years. If you do that you will get a higher resale value. Keeping them to 30 years, you will only get a scrap value. A commitment needs to be made to replace these items and get them in the capital improvements plan. Phil Gogel commented he wants to know if the Fire Company is happy with the motion. He is not happy with it, but is okay with it if the Fire Company is. He has an issue with that one area. Rick Hildebrand commented it is a gray area. Their concern is not knowing if the money will be there or not when the Board has the ability to adjust to make sure it is. John Haggerty questioned if the loan portion of the motion could be stricken. Mike Jones commented it is listed as *if* there is a shortfall. John Haggerty commented he understands, but they don't have any options. David Hess commented there are possibilities for funding if it is needed. John Haggerty commented the Fire House can promise that they are willing to work in good faith to help with the funding, but there is a concern that they may not be able to reach what is needed.

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John Noblach, 4415 Katlyn Drive, commented his concern with putting the thermometer at the fire house and asking for donations on line is that the Fire House is already using donations from the community to meet the expenses at the fire house and people only have so much money. What impact will the contributions towards the truck have on them? They already take care of the fire house and the equipment and volunteer their time. It's unfair to them; you can only pull them in so many directions. Cindy Miller commented the reason she suggested this was to bring awareness to the community that we are collecting for a firetruck. The Township can't do it; we are not allowed to do it. Rick Hildebrand commented the fire company has been sending out mailers to the community and only 25 percent respond. A sign in the yard has less exposure; people aren't going to care. Cindy Miller commented we need to promote it. We will also be placing articles in the paper to promote this to the community. Rick Hildebrand questioned if there was going to be a partnership in this between the Fire Company and the Board. Cindy Miller commented, yes, it is a joint effort between both parties. The message needs to get out to the community. People are asking her if we really need a \$1.9 million ladder truck. We need to be able to answer those questions to the community. She's not saying we don't. Rick Hildebrand commented the longer the can gets kicked down the road, the more it will cost. Cindy Miller commented that is why she is saying in order to sign today to save that money, there is at least \$1.55 million available. Katherine Mack commented the motion tonight was long coming. The Fire Company is already giving their blood, sweat, and tears. To get the \$300,000, you divide it over the 10,000 people in the township, it comes to \$30 a piece. Give them the \$300,000 and get it out of the motion; give it to them. Raise the tax enough so that is not even in the motion. They deserve what they get and they shouldn't have to go out and beg from the community. There shouldn't be any loan; no caveats. Take it out of the motion and make the fire tax work. Mike Jones commented not everyone wants a high fire tax. Katherine Mack commented no one wants to do that, but it is necessary. Things cost money. Eventually you have to pay for what is needed. That is what a community does; it pays for their services and they pay for it through their tax money. Jerry Pritchard commented people also look at what the taxes are in a community before they decide to move there. That is why some people don't move to certain cities. They look at the whole package. If the fire tax is done correctly, it will work. But if it is give, give, give, it will not work. You have to manage your money right. Phil Gogel commented he would like to see the motion amended to remove the \$300,000 from the fire company's responsibility. They can still take the loan, but the Township will service the loan and pay for it so they are not going to be liable for it. Cindy Miller commented she would be willing to amend the motion if you can tell her how the Township would pay for it. Phil Gogel commented the fire tax is not set in stone at this point so an adjustment would be needed to the tax to cover

the shortfall. Roughly figuring, it would be around 1.75 mills. It will cover the gap for what is needed in the next three years and not put people in sticker shock again after it is enacted. Jerry Pritchard questioned, what about the people on a fixed income. Phil Gogel commented people on a fixed income can apply for tax forgiveness. There are agencies that can help them out, but you have to qualify. Kristin Soldridge questioned what about the people who don't qualify. There are people in this township that don't pay taxes. If they are not paying, then their share becomes a burden on the people who are. Phil Gogel commented if they are not paying taxes, they are not doing so for a reason. There is an exemption available for everyone. It is state law. Kristin Soldridge commented she is concerned about the comment that was made at a previous meeting if there is a fire involving a solar panel, they would just let it burn; they wouldn't touch it. There are a lot of homes with solar panels on them. If they are going to let a house with solar panels on it burn, they why would that individual be responsible for paying the fire tax. Rick Hildebrand commented there is a lot of technology available for that. They pride themselves in putting fires out, not letting them burn so that wouldn't happen. He said solar is a challenge because you can't turn solar panels off. Kristin Soldridge commented she believes the fire tax is needed, but it needs to be looked into further; most other municipalities are at mill or less. Rick Hildebrand commented Northampton Borough's tax is at 1 mill and it is only for the apparatus. They still get additional funding from the general fund. Mike Jones commented he spoke with someone from their fireman's relief and he indicated that wasn't the case. He was impressed with the amount of money that is currently being given to the fire company compared to what they get. Marc Kacsmar commented he is all for supporting the fire company but commented the fire tax runs the risk of the 25 percent contribution being reduced. Rick Hildebrand commented there does need to be education, but there was a poll taken in other communities and that wasn't an issue. All voted aye to the motion as stated. Phil Gogel commented he doesn't agree with the hook that is in the motion. Motion carried.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Maintenance Building. Alice Rehrig commented she has been in contact with Stantec who is the consultant that was assigned to our first grant. They will be having a discussion next week regarding the whole process for submitting payment requests and other related documentation.

Cindy Miller questioned how we will be comparing the bills that are received to the specifications for the project to make sure we're not being over billed and that the contractor is staying on track. Mike Jones commented he would think that W2A should be doing that as part of the service they are doing for us. He also recalls Adam Raker saying he would look at things as he has time. Cindy Miller commented