

LEHIGH TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

February 25, 2025

- I. CALL TO ORDER. The Lehigh Township Board of Supervisors held their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Lehigh Township Municipal Building, 1069 Municipal Road, Walnutport, Pa. 18088. Chairman Mike Jones called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

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

The Chairman announced the Board held an executive session prior to the meeting. No action was taken.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- A. February 11, 2025. David Hess made a motion to approve these minutes. Janet Sheats seconded the motion. Cindy Miller commented on Page 4, the question she asked regarding grants should be “if LTMA planned on filing for any additional grants”. The remainder of that sentence should be deleted. All voted aye. Motion carried.

III. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- A. General Fund Checks 28495 to 28532. Janet Sheats made a motion to approve these bills. David Hess seconded the motion. Jerry Pritchard questioned what was included in the payment to Pine Run Construction. Alice Rehrig commented that is the remaining balance of the contract because the system is complete and operational. The change order is not included in the amount and has not been paid. Cindy Miller questioned Check 28513 and the charges that were included in the 410 ledger account. Alice Rehrig commented there were a variety of charges including issues with their server, Outlook not syncing, security issues, and server migration for the new server. Cindy Miller also questioned Check 28524 regarding the monthly fire pump test. Is this for the new building? Alice Rehrig commented it was. Cindy Miller commented if this will be an ongoing expense. Alice Rehrig commented it will be an ongoing expense. Some of it may be able to be cut back as everyone becomes more familiar with the system, but there are some required annual testing. Cindy Miller questioned if we were made aware of this? Alice Rehrig commented we were not. Mike Jones questioned Checks 28515 and 28516 regarding the fire tax

payments. Alice Rehrig commented there are tax bills generated in Lehigh Township's name because the exempt properties are being taxed. Janet Sheats questioned if these are all our properties. Alice Rehrig commented there are several parcels with the parks and railroad beds. Linda Roman questioned why the Township owned all the properties? Alice Rehrig commented a lot of the parks have several parcels associated with them. Mike Jones questioned what LTAA was charged for using the park. Alice Rehrig commented the lease states \$1. Mike Jones questioned why we wouldn't be charging them for the fire tax. Cindy Miller commented she questioned that before. All of the leases should be reviewed. Janet Sheats asked if the Board could be provided with the information as to which tax goes with which property. Jerry Pritchard questioned if properties could be sold if the Township is not using them. Attorney Backenstoe commented the Township could sell them as long as there wasn't a restriction placed on them because they were acquired for a specific purpose such as a recreation area. Paul Nikisher commented he agrees with charging the leased properties the cost of the fire tax and also agrees with selling what is not used because that is a liability. Monica Brown commented as neighboring properties are sold, the new people may be interested in the railroad beds. All voted aye. Motion carried.

B. State Fund Check 1617. Cindy Miller made a motion to approve this bill. Janet Sheats seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Maintenance Building. Alice Rehrig reported the tank probes were ordered around the time of our last meeting and the authorization to order the thermometers was given to them on February 14th. Cindy Miller questioned when they would be complete with the project. Alice Rehrig commented there is a four week lead time on the thermometers. It will be around mid-March until they come in. Jerry Pritchard questioned if there was a retainer being held. Alice Rehrig commented the retainer for the entire project is still being held. Cindy Miller questioned what the holdup was in ordering the parts so this could be done by the end of February. Alice Rehrig commented the first step in the process was to determine if the heating units were the appropriate size. The submission and review of the calculations was completed at the end of January. Then the contractor was told to submit the cut sheets for the longer probes and thermometers. This information was submitted to the architect at the beginning of February and the architect did not give the approval until February 14. Once the approval was received, the order was placed.

Jerry Pritchard commented we came this far and are holding their retainer. What is the harm in waiting another month? Cindy Miller commented they have until the end of March and it better be done. How long will we drag this out? Mike Jones commented why not give them until the last meeting in March.

- Janet Sheats made a motion to extend their deadline until the end of March. If they don't comply, then the Board will move forward in another direction. Cindy Miller seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.
- B. Park & Recreation Consultant. Cindy Miller made a motion to move forward with hiring a consultant for park and recreation. Janet Sheats seconded the motion. Janet Sheats questioned if this was placed out to bid, does the Board have to accept the bids. Attorney Backenstoe commented the Board can always reserve the right to accept or reject any or all bids. Janet Sheats also questioned what it will cost to put it out to bid. Alice Rehrig commented it would be the cost of the advertisement which is about \$200. It can also be placed on PennBid. Mike Jones questioned how much is in the Rec Fund Budget this year; we know we need to repair the tennis courts. We know they need to be completed. Cindy Miller commented this should have been raised during budget time. Alice Rehrig commented there was \$50,000 included for the consultant and \$25,000 for the tennis courts. Mike Jones commented he would prefer to have the cost for the tennis courts finalized before spending money on the consultant. Jerry Pritchard commented until we have the projects before us completed, why would we put money into something else. Cindy Miller questioned why is the Board not being given a proposal to review with the total cost of the project when the Rec board does a project. The Board hasn't seen it for the wall or the tennis courts. They haven't seen anything. What was budgeted for the wall? Alice Rehrig commented it was \$16,000. Jerry Pritchard commented the information is before the Board. He doesn't agree with paying a consultant until our projects are done. They will just be telling the Board what they already know. Cindy Miller questioned if grants will be applied for, for the tennis courts. There is a lot of recreation money out there. Jerry Pritchard commented once we get through these projects, then we really could discuss the consultant. He just can't see giving our money to a consultant right now, when we know what needs to be done. Cindy Miller rescinded her motion and made a motion to table this. David Hess seconded the motion. Janet Sheats questioned if we could add until we get Mike Muffley's report back to the motion. Paul Nikisher questioned how much was in the Rec Fund. Alice Rehrig commented the budget for the tennis courts and the consultant totals \$75,000. The Rec Land Fees are \$65,000 and the Rec Capital Account of \$95,000. All voted aye table this. Motion carried.
- C. Berlinsville Park Wall Padding & Fencing. Jerry Pritchard commented he has reached out to three different people. The company with the lowest price doesn't fit into the timeline for the start of baseball season. Cindy Miller commented she wants a complete proposal for the cost of the wall. When the Rec Board decided to do this, they should have come to the Board in an advisory capacity saying this is what the wall was going to cost and ask for approval to move forward. Jerry Pritchard commented they came to the Board and a motion was made to move forward with the

wall. Cindy Miller commented that is because the Board was told \$20,000. Jerry Pritchard commented that is why they don't want to spend the money on the consultant. If you go over on a project and don't have money left, what do you do? Cindy Miller commented this project is coming close to costing \$50,000. Mike Jones questioned what has been completed so far at the park. Alice Rehrig commented the wall has been completed. The cost was around \$14,700 she believes. There was also a quote for padding at the start of the project that was \$14,600 and the Lions were planning on paying \$14,000 for the padding. Cindy Miller commented she wants to see the wall costs, the padding costs, the fencing costs, and a total. We don't have that. Wayne Kleintop commented he gave the Board a paper with all the costs for the wall and a cost for the padding from a company he found on the internet. Jerry Pritchard commented he has a proposal for the padding if that is the direction we want to go. Wayne Kleintop commented another option would be to install a 10 foot high fence along the wall. This would probably be a lower cost and eliminate the need for the padding and the additional 4 foot high fence on top of the wall. He is waiting for a price on the fencing. Cindy Miller commented for the next meeting she would like to see the total costs of this and how much is being donated. In the future, she would like the Rec Board to put together an entire cost estimate of what a project, such as the tennis courts, will cost and what portions are being donated. Jerry Pritchard commented he has been shopping around for pricing on the padding but it is coming in too high. He spoke with Wayne Kleintop about the fencing as a solution. Mike Jones commented he believes the individuals who contributed to this project should be recognized.

A resident questioned if there are tournament teams from out of the area using the Berlinsville Field. Mike Jones commented there are some men's leagues and Connie Mack teams that play there. Jerry Pritchard commented the tournament teams have not been at the field for a few years.

Cindy Miller questioned how much money is being made on the field. Alice Rehrig commented it is \$75 per game for non-home teams. Cindy Miller questioned how much money was made in 2024 and what is Slatinton being charged. Alice Rehrig commented Slatinton will be paying about \$1,500 for the season; lights are separate. In 2024, the outside teams that used the fields were the Senior Night, the Braves played about 10 games and the Cyclones played around 8 games. Jerry Pritchard requested the Board be provided a breakdown of what everyone has paid for using the field and lights and what the totals were for 2024. Cindy Miller questioned if the teams that are playing on the field are residents or non-residents. Jerry Pritchard commented they are a combination of both.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Presentation on Farmland/Open Space Preservation. Zach Szoke and Mike Hock provided a presentation regarding the benefits of an open space preservation program. Zach Szoke and Mike Hock both come from large longstanding families in the Township both have lived here their entire lives and care about the Township. They care about where it is going and the citizens of the Township. They also understand that while they live here, it is their turn to do what is right for the land and right by the people of the Township. Their sole purpose of the presentation is to educate the Board and citizens who are at the meeting.

Mike Hock works for an organization that does this type of work throughout the Lehigh Valley and Poconos. He is not here on their behalf, but while working for them he has gained an appreciation for this. He is here as a resident of Lehigh Township.

There are different methods of preservation that can be done. One method is a fee simple acquisition in which the Township can purchase property for parks and open space. It does come with long term ownership and management. Schiavone Park in Moore Township is an example where they purchased 73 acres of land. Kept 23 acres as a park, preserved the remaining 53 acres, and then sold it. The two other methods of preservation are agriculture and conservation easements. An easement is a voluntary agreement between the land owner and a trusted organization that permanently protects the agriculture and/or conservation value of a property. The organization would purchase the development rights from the landowner. The landowner still owns the land and maintains the rights of the land, but there are restrictions and limits on development. The land is effectively protected from development forever. The conservation easement stays with the land regardless of the owner. Agriculture easements are farm focused and based. They are generally funded by the County farmland preservation programs. There are strict requirements of the property as far as size and soil. Conservation Easements are more woodland and natural resource focused and funded through township land and preservation programs. The township would choose which criteria for which properties would be protected. If a farm is not qualified for the County program, this would be an alternative to protect a qualified farm.

There are economic benefits to protecting land. According to the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, every year there is a \$110,000 million in avoided costs in protecting our water supply, avoiding flooding and similar items because of preservation in the Lehigh Valley. There is also a value to the local economy for outdoor recreation. It is estimated that there is \$795 million spent on outdoor recreation, supplying almost 10,000 jobs. Lehigh Township is rich in natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities between the Blue Mountain,

Appalachian Trail, State Gamelands, Lehigh River, and nearby D & L Trails. People are coming to the Township and spending money because we have these parks and open space. Property values tend to increase when they are located near open space and trails, and conservation and agriculture easements.

In his research, he learned that the average cost to provide services to residences is \$1.16 per \$1 generated in taxes. You are basically spending more money for services than what is being brought in. New residential development can actually cost a municipality money because of the cost of community services, including road maintenance, police and fire services. MS4 or managing stormwater requirements are becoming the responsibility of the municipality. The more impervious cover there is, the more of a burden it will put on a municipality. The cost of schooling children also is a great expense. It becomes a net loss to the community. A way of offsetting these costs is open space and land preservation. The average cost to provide services to farms and open space is \$.37 for every \$1 generated in taxes. It becomes money saved by the Township for each property that is not developed.

Cindy Miller questioned if LVPC discussed how the municipalities would handle the run off as it pertained to the MS4 requirements. Mike Hock commented that they didn't specifically discuss that but he does know agriculture run off is a concern. Cindy Miller commented on one side, DEP is promoting agriculture, you can use sludge, you can use this, and use can use that, but the next door, DEP is saying you have to manage it.

Jerry Pritchard commented with all the development taking place around us, we are going to have to pick up the slack in tax revenue for the schools. The Township can't do anything to control that. Mike Hock commented the more municipalities that preserve land and reduce development, the more it helps the situation. It helps slow the rate of the increase in taxes when there is development. The cost of developing a farm is greater than the cost of preserving the farm.

There has been discussion as to whether or not residents want this type of program. Mike Hock believes they do because there was a county wide survey that indicated that 95 percent of the people in Northampton County support protecting farmland. In addition, 73 percent of the people agree that more open space and parks should be acquired and developed and protecting our rivers, lakes, and streams should be the highest priority for municipalities. Municipal parks are the most frequently visited parks by our communities. They are something that people want. Surrounding municipalities have adopted preservation and open space programs. The County as a whole has a preservation program. It is a program that has been very successful all around us. There are only three rural townships that have not adopted the program.

Cindy Miller commented she believes a lot of the municipalities have adopted the open space program to stop the proliferation of the warehouses. Municipalities didn't have their zoning in order and got caught. The Economic Development for the Lehigh Valley was pushing for these warehouses. Now that they have proliferated this area, there is now all of a sudden a kickback or slow down of maybe we shouldn't have push this many, but now it is too late.

Mike Hock also noted the Lehigh Township Comprehensive Plan also has goals listed that he believes align with preservation, such as protection of natural resources, particularly the Blue Mountain, Lehigh River, and Bertsch, Indian, and Hockendauqua Creek corridors; limit development on steep slopes and encourage proper management of woodlands, promoting the continuation of agricultural activities and encouraging additional permanent preservation of prime agriculture lands, and other zoning type of items such as open space in developments and directing development to areas of water and sewer to minimize the amount of land consumed by new development.

There are community benefits to farmland and open space programs such as clean air, water, reduced flooding, protecting wildlife, recreational and health benefits, food security, reduced traffic, reduced crime rate, attracting higher taxpayers, and a better quality of life.

Mr. Hock commented he believes it is a now or never type of scenario. There is rapid growth in the Lehigh Valley and it will be spreading into Lehigh Township. There is 2,000 acres of open space lost every year. He believes that is why the Nazareth and East Allen Township recently adopted the program; they see the changes coming. Lower Macungie Township was once considered one of the fastest growing municipalities in the country. In 1999, there were a lot of farmlands, approximately 75 to 80 percent farm field. That same area today is probably 75 to 80 percent developed. He doesn't believe they saw that type of growth coming over a 25 year period. He believes it would behoove the Township to make a switch and that we are probably next in this regard.

He believes that economically open space and farmland preservation is an investment in our future. It is a good way to slow down tax increases and keep the tax rates good for a variety of reasons. It pays for itself between the increase property values and the savings on community services. It is an effective tool for a lot of municipalities and provides a benefit to the entire community.

Mike Jones questioned if at any point, can the easements be removed from a property. Mike Hock commented the only way a property can come out of a preserved easement is through eminent domain. There are also a lot of rules that go with this.

Board of Supervisor Minutes
February 25, 2025

Mike Jones questioned how many people who are working for Moore Township only work on these types of projects. Dave Shaffer, a Moore Township Supervisor and the liaison to the preservation board was present. He indicated none of the employees have to work on the preservation. If someone wants to preserve a farm, they go through the County. If it is to preserve open space, they go through either Wildlands or Heritage Conservancy; they do it all. Their Manager has to go to closings with Attorney Backenstoe and cut some checks, but the preservation board is all volunteer and they are the ones that talk with the property owners.

Mike Jones questioned how Moore Township developed their guidelines. Dave Shaffer commented they came up with their own by looking at what other municipalities did and also with the assistance of Wildlands and Heritage Conservancy. The Board of Supervisors ultimately have the final say as to whether or not they will accept an easement.

Cindy Miller questioned how much Moore Township pays for maintenance on the open space. Dave Shaffer commented the only preserved property that they own is Schiavone Park. It takes two guys about an hour or so to mow. They planted trees and installed park benches through grants. The preservation funds can also be used to maintain the property.

Cindy Miller questioned if Moore Township had an EAC. Mr. Shaffer commented they used to have an EAC and a Land Preservation Board. They combined them into a Land and Environmental Protection Board. Cindy Miller questioned if they review plans that go through the Planning Commission. Mr. Shaffer commented they do not. Their role is for open space ranking, electronic recycling events, and the Township News Letter. Bushkill Township has an EAC that reviews plans. Cindy Miller noted her concern is that adds an extra layer of bureaucracy.

Mike Jones questioned if someone has a large farm, are they still able to sell land off for family? Mr. Shaffer commented you are allowed to build one home on preserved land. If you want to keep lots for family, you would need to discuss that in advance and create exclusion lots. Mike Hock commented the area set aside is a minimal protection area which is where all development is limited to. The other way is to subdivide the lots off in advance. You would speak with the owner in advance to get their sense of what they may be planning for now and the future. If it is not set up prior to preservation, there is only one home allowed on the preserved area.

Cindy Miller questioned what the minimum acreage would be for preservation? Attorney Backenstoe commented the minimum for County farmland preservation is

10 acres. Mr. Shaffer commented the Moore Township guidelines are more about what you have than how much you have. They will preserve smaller lots which have the appropriate characteristics.

Janet Sheats questioned where the information regarding the increase in property values came from. Mike Hock commented it was part of the information provided by LVPC. He does not know how they developed their data. Janet Sheats commented the property values of Northampton County can vary greatly. Mike Hock commented he would expect that the values would increase more in urban areas than in suburban areas. It was determined that property values increase when they are near open space. There is most likely a range in which the values increase.

Attorney Backenstoe noted the State statute was amended a few years ago where you may now use up to 25 percent of the open space funds that are received each year for maintenance on open space and existing park area. Mr. Shaffer commented this will open up general fund recreation money in your budget. Attorney Backenstoe commented is not a cart blanche use of the funds. It needs to be generally consistent with the Statute and the ordinance.

Janet Sheats questioned how it was determined that open space reduced crime. Mike Hock commented it was listed on the LVPC website. He pulled all his information from non-profit and government agencies, not random websites. The sites he used are all well vetted sources. Mike Jones commented it would make sense that if there are less people, there would be less crime.

Janet Sheats questioned what costs would be associated with the program, such as Attorney Backenstoe's fees. Attorney Backenstoe commented the statute was amended that a lot of the fees can be offset by the funds, including legal fees associates with title searches, the acquisition of title insurance, and appraisals.

Cindy Miller questioned if the money could be used as matching funds for grants. Attorney Backenstoe commented the funds can be used to acquire lands by fee simple acquisition which is the less common use of the funds. Most time people want to sell the development rights to preserve the open space where an easement is acquired and the property owner still owns the property and the property is subject to the preservation easement in perpetuity. This is the only use of the money. Once the program is enacted, it must be in place for five years. If you want to undo it, it must be again placed on the ballot for referendum to see if the residents want to stop the program. Mike Jones questioned what happens if there is money in the fund and nothing to purchase. Attorney Backenstoe commented the money can just sit there and a portion can be used to maintain parks. Dave Shaffer commented if the

Township were to apply for a grant to improve the land with something like a pavilion, and there was a matching fund requirement, you most likely could use money from the program as the match. Generally passive recreation improvements can be used and active improvements such as a pickle ball court would not be an acceptable use of the funds.

Mike Jones questioned how much money is generated by Moore Township? Dave Shaffer commented Moore Township receives \$830,000 per year.

Mike Jones questioned how preservation effects the rate in which a property is taxed. Is the property still taxed? Mr. Shaffer commented the millage for the land is frozen at the rate it enters into preservation.

Jerry Pritchard questioned if the Township would be subject to paying the fire tax on the land that is preserved. Attorney Backenstoe commented if the Township is purchasing the conservation easement, they would not be responsible for the tax because the property would not be owned by the Township. The land would still be owned by the property owner. If you buy the property for fee simple acquisition, then the Township owns the property and is responsible.

David Hess questioned if the Township were to purchase land and then decide to sell a portion of the property, would the proceeds from the sale have to stay within the program. Attorney Backenstoe confirmed the money from the sale would need to go back into the program.

Mr. Shaffer commented if the Township purchased land through the program, they would be able to build pavilions on the land to rent out with the funds from the program. Mike Jones questioned if the funds could be used for a NPDES permit if one is needed. Attorney Backenstoe commented there is no case law as to whether or not that would be a permitted use.

Janet Sheats commented the residents need to understand how much this program would cost them if it were enacted. Zach Szoke commented someone who is earning \$100,000 would be paying \$250 in additional earned income tax.

Mike Jones questioned if the .25 percent increase in earned income tax is a standard or could a future Board want to increase it at a higher rate. Attorney Backenstoe commented the .25 percent is the maximum amount allowed by statute at this time. The Board could choose to do a lower rate.

Dave Shaffer also noted the County literally pays for the Township to hold an electronic recycling event. They will refund the Township the costs of electronic recycling. When they hold their event, the contractor handles the entire event. There is no Township staff involved. He also thinks it would be a good idea for Lehigh Township and Moore Township as neighboring municipalities to exchange ideas and information.

A resident questioned if you put your property into this program, are you paying taxes on the original value of your property or the value of your property after the development rights were sold. Attorney Backenstoe commented you would be paying for the full value based upon the assessed value. The County assessments do not look at whether or not the development rights were sold. The resident questioned if this could make a property less desirable because you can only sell the property at a lower price, but the taxes are based on a higher value. Mike Jones noted that the millage rate is frozen.

Marc Kerksmar questioned if the frozen millage rate is in place in perpetuity. Attorney Backenstoe commented the only thing that he can think of that would change the rate would be a reassessment or if one of the taxing entities pulled out of Act 4 which froze the rate.

Marc Kerksmar commented if the preservation program is voted out in another 10 or 15 years, the Township will be on the hook for the maintenance of the properties that were acquired without the earned income tax coming in. Mike Jones commented the Township could use any money that was collected but unused until all the money was gone. Then it would fall back on the taxpayers.

Mike Jones questioned if the money from the program could be invested. Attorney Backenstoe commented the money could only be placed in investments that are authorized by the Second Class Township Code which is very limited.

Jerry Pritchard questioned what the process would be to enact the program. Attorney Backenstoe commented the Board would need to authorize him to prepare an ordinance authorizing the referendum, draft the referendum and send it to the Election Board at least 13 Tuesdays before the election, then it would be voted on and if approved, then another ordinance would need to be adopted authorizing the .25 percent increase in earned income tax and what it can be used for. Jerry Pritchard commented the one thing he wants is for the residents to really understand the program and how it works. Then, the vote goes how the vote goes.

Janet Sheats questioned if Moore Township received community input before they put the referendum on the ballot. Attorney Backenstoe commented he believes they

did try. Mr. Shaffer commented there was public engagement and people knew what they were voting for. They also did a survey as to what was a priority for the residents. Janet Sheats commented she would feel much more comfortable if there was some type of workshop for the community before the Board even voted on whether or not to move forward with this. Mike Jones commented there could possibly be another presentation at the Fire Company.

Cindy Miller questioned how tight Moore Township's Zoning Ordinance was at the time the preservation program was enacted. Mr. Shaffer commented he didn't know because he wasn't involved at that time.

Phil Gogel commented his family also has been in the area for a lot time and understands what Mike Hock and Zach Szoke are trying to do. He thinks they would be better served if they were to form a 501c non-profit and take it on themselves rather than ask the taxpayers to pay the freight for a few. As a non-profit, they could solicit funds and buy the property and preserve it. Mike Hock commented he works for a non-profit and it is near impossible. His company has helped in preserving about 60,000 acres of land, but it was mostly done through bargain sales, donations, grants, and similar items. It doesn't happen on the community level at the rate that can be done through the earned income tax. The grants typically don't rank very high for small projects. It is mostly through donations. They help to facilitate deals, but the land purchase is typically through another entity. Phil Gogel commented he is all for preserving farms and understands this, but people need a place to live. Mike Hock commented you can slow the growth through the preservation program and zoning. Phil Gogel commented if people want to slow things, he believes they should open their wallets and purchase the land themselves.

Zach Szoke commented zoning can always change. Cindy Miller commented the zoning is based upon who is making the decisions as elected officials on the Board. People need to make sure that they are electing the right people. Mike Hock commented there is a saying that is used by his colleagues: Protect the best, zone the rest. Meaning take the farms and nice quality properties and protect them because that is forever. You can do the best you can with zoning for the rest.

Phil Gogel commented he spoke with a resident who said he understands the need for commercial along the main roads, and then preserve the rest of the land. He believes that is the way to go, preserve the interior lands. Zach Szoke commented the Board always has the last say. If someone comes to them for preservation and the Board feels the property would be best served as commercial development, they can turn it down. Participation in the program is voluntary.

Ryan Weiner commented the residents hear about needing more police and a fire tax. He believes this is a program where everyone can get behind and do something good for our children and our future. It's an upfront cost, but in the future, it is a gain. Right now, the only ones making money are the developers. In the future, you will be saving tax payers money. Janet Sheats questioned if he believed people would rather pay for this than for community policing or a fire department. Ryan Weiner commented if there are less people moving here, there are less properties that need to be patrolled and less police needed. Janet Sheats commented we will still have the same population.

Linda Roman commented with land preservation you will be able to keep your community. When you have developers coming in, you have wasted land. Look at all the farmlands we no longer have in the Township. She would rather pay land preservation than a fire tax.

Wayne Kleintop questioned if the money that is received rolls over from year to year and can it be accumulated. Mr. Shaffer commented it does. Moore Township currently has a million or so accumulated. People come to the Township for the preservation. The Township does not go seeking people out. They do not say no because of a lack of funding. He also noted that at one point, the County was not funding a farmland preservation budget. If the property didn't rank high enough for state funding, the County would come to Moore Township and see if they could contribute towards it.

Zach Szoke questioned what the plan would be for moving this forward. Janet Sheats commented the Board needs to make a decision by June. In the meantime she would like to do a workshop. Cindy Miller commented she believes the Board needs to take a vote on how they are moving forward. The Board really needs to talk about this. Zach Szoke commented their intention was to do things in steps. Last meeting Attorney Backenstoe provided information on the process. Tonight they were hoping to convince the Board that the \$1.37 in services to every \$1 of tax is factual and real and the \$.37 to for preserved land for every \$1 of tax is factual and real. It is better in the long run to stray away from housing developments and preserve what we have. Then, perhaps get the approval of the Board to keep on going and that the Board would be behind them to start a community wide education program. Janet Sheats commented her priority is what the residents think. Jerry Pritchard commented he believes we need to bring this to the community. Couldn't a motion be made to set a date to bring this to the community at the fire house? Cindy Miller commented before we can have the community involved, the Board needs to be in a position that the Board is going to move forward and not sit on this. If in the next month or two we want this to go to the community, the Board needs to be prepared to make a

motion to move this forward. She doesn't want to have them do a presentation and then the Board sit on the idea for another year. Janet Sheats commented she can't move forward until she knows how our residents feel. Jerry Pritchard commented there needs to be a public awareness meeting. Cindy Miller commented she is looking at everything the Board has on their plate and questioning if the Board wants to tackle this right now or do they want to wait. Jerry Pritchard commented he thinks we should take it before the community and if there is an overwhelming shift towards doing this, then we do it. If there is not, then we don't do it. Cindy Miller commented she is questioning, if as a Board, they have the time to commit to this to move it forward. Once we hold the meeting with the public, we are moving forward and there is time to invest. The Board will have to put time into this.

Monica Brown commented this should be in the newsletter to make people aware of it. If you keep pushing it off, there will be no land to preserve. Alice Rehrig commented the spring newsletter is currently in production.

Mike Jones commented he understands that we have busy plates, but there will always be busy plates and it will keep being pushed off. Cindy Miller commented there has to be a plan as to how we are going to do this. She wants this done right. Rick Hildebrand commented he agrees with Cindy Miller. It goes back to the park plan where you have a whole bunch of different proposals, but you don't have the whole package together. If you want to sit down at a community gathering and present a plan and you don't have the plan ironed out and finalized for introduction, everyone will be all over the place. You have to have it ironed out ahead of time and present it to the voters as a sealed package. If they vote it in, it goes. Then there is no question.

Marc Kerksmar commented when the fire tax was discussed, not all the residents showed up. How did Moore Township handle the survey to get feedback from most of the residents? Is one meeting at the Fire Company good enough? Should a survey be placed in the newsletter?

Cindy Miller commented she is looking at how long it took the Board to do the fire tax and the meetings they had.

Zach Szoke commented the first step is to get the Supervisors on board with the idea. The second step will be to get the public on board which would be the vote in November. Mr. Szoke questioned how much time it would take Attorney Backenstoe to prepare the necessary paperwork if the Board were to say yes and move forward with putting a referendum on the ballot. Attorney Backenstoe commented you need to work backwards as far as a time frame. The Board would need to have an adopted ordinance to the Board of Elections 13 Tuesdays before the election. You need a

month to advertise the ordinance. The Board can do whatever background work they want to do, and if they say to him, yes, we want to move forward, he will immediately prepare an ordinance and advertise it. The ordinance does not adopt the tax; it authorizes the question to be placed as a referendum on the ballot. He would draft the referendum and get it to the Board of Elections 13 weeks before the election and then it would be voted upon during the election. Zach Szoke questioned how much time it would take to prepare the documents. Attorney Backenstoe commented it would take a few weeks. Zach Szoke commented in theory, there would still be enough time to have this placed on the November ballot.

Jerry Pritchard commented the word regarding this can be spread while the Township is working out a plan. He remembers when an EAC was proposed for the Township. The night the Supervisors voted whether or not they should form one was at the Fire Company and people were lined up out the door. The people need to know. David Hess commented he is against the idea right now, but if the residents can be educated, he may reconsider. Mike Jones commented he is thinking it may be best to potentially aim for the primary election. That would give time to get the word out. Cindy Miller also questioned if the Board wants the .25 percent or do they maybe want to consider .15 percent. The Board doesn't know what they are planning and this should all be laid out. Mike Jones questioned when the next newsletter will be coming out. Alice Rehrig commented it usually gets delivered in early October. Mike Jones commented this should be in that newsletter, that the Board is considering doing this to let people know when there would be a meeting or how to voice their opinion. This way it goes to every household. Cindy Miller commented it needs to be a frontpage article.

Rick Hildebrand commented when there were public meetings held regarding the fire tax, only a quarter of the fire hall was filled. Out of the 11,000 people in the township, there is limited representation at these meetings. You can advertise how ever much you want and people won't care to come out until their tax goes up. If you have an iron clad package of how people were notified, there is no recourse. It is all on the voters.

Phil Gogel commented people elect the Supervisors to make the decisions. They don't want to hear anything other than everything is going fine; don't raise my taxes. The Supervisors are the representatives. Whomever gets the rosiest story out wins.

Ryan Weiner commented the people will make the decision by voting at the ballot. The Board could make the decision tonight to have it go to the ballot and still educate the people. Cindy Miller commented she is not voting for this until there is an iron clad plan of how the Board is going to do this. The Board doesn't even know what percentage they are going to use. Janet Sheats commented she is not voting until she

has an opportunity to speak to the residents and taxpayers and fully inform them as to what is going on and how it affects them. Cindy Miller commented if the vote to move this forward is in the minutes, she will be getting 20 calls about, what is this about open space and you are going to increase taxes again. Her response would be, we don't know yet and people will question that.

Mike Hock commented the vote for this meeting should be voting on a plan to get it to the public. Everyone is worried about the public seeing it before it is on the ballot, then let's come up with a plan of how to get it to the public. Everyone is worrying about getting it to the ballot when we should be worrying about how to get it to the people.

Zach Szoke commented the Board has all the information. Maybe they could take the next two weeks to think on it, do additional research. Maybe at the next meeting they can come up with a game plan.

This will be on the March 25, 2025, meeting agenda.

B. Manager's Report. Alice Rehrig reported the work on the Route 873 bridge will be starting on March 6. The bridge will be closed to southbound traffic and there will be occasional full closures in the evenings and on the weekends. The closure will be until September 22.

1. Phone System. Alice Rehrig reported she received three proposals for a new phone system. There is a fourth one that is outstanding. Of the three proposals she has received, the one from Galco would be the recommendation. Cindy Miller commented she has questions on the proposal but will wait until the last proposal is received. This was tabled until the fourth proposal is received.

Janet Sheats questioned if the fueling station is up and running. Alice Rehrig commented it is fully operational. They are currently using the fuel from the old tanks so they can be removed.

C. Solicitor's Report. Attorney Backenstoe did not have anything specific to report.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT. There was no additional public comment.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. The Board went into Executive Session to discuss Collective Bargaining and Personnel. No action was taken.

VIII. ADJOURN. Janet Sheats made a motion to adjourn. David Hess seconded them motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.