

LEHIGH TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

May 26, 2026

- I. CALL TO ORDER. The Lehigh Township Board of Supervisors held their second monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 26, 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: David Hess  
Janet Sheats  
Jerry Pritchard  
Mike Jones  
David Backenstoe  
Alice Rehrig

Absent: Cindy Miller

The Chairman announced the Board met in Executive Session to conduct interviews for candidates for the position of police officer. The results of the interviews will be discussed under new business.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- A. May 12, 2026. Janet Sheats made a motion to approve the minutes. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

III. APPROVAL OF THE BILLS

- A. General Fund Checks 29589 to 29648. Janet Sheats made a motion to approve these bills. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

IV. PLANNING RELATED ITEMS

- A. Lehigh Valley Resort & Spa Update. Fred Ebert and Nicole Galio were present to provide an update on the project. Fred Ebert commented they broke ground for the new sewer plant at the beginning of May. The tanks are expected to be set in June or early July. The majority of the work will be completed by the end of summer, and they will continue working through the remaining punch list items, most likely through November. The installation of the mechanical equipment will be delayed until they are closer to getting the flows from the resort. By delaying the installation of mechanical items, the warranties will be pushed out further. It is also not good to start up the equipment and then let it sit.

Nichole Galio commented they have been addressing some internal issues with the resort so they can get to the budget they are looking for. They will be coming back to the Board most likely in July for an extension of time for the recording of the plan so that it is more in line with the completion of the plant expansion.

Linda Roman questioned how they will be handling the flood water. Mr. Ebert commented DEP requires them to have the plant at least one foot above the 100 year flood plain. The plant is actually six feet above the 100 year flood plain.

Paul Nikisher questioned if there will be a need to run additional piping. Fred Ebert commented they will need to add a pipe under the stream bed since they will be phasing out the Kola Road pump station and they will also need to make two cuts on Indiantrail Road, one for water and one for sewer.

V. OLD BUSINESS. There was no old business.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Police Patrol Officer

1. Conclusion of Probationary Period—Richard Houser. Janet Sheats made a motion to conclude the probationary period of Officer Houser and retain him as a full time officer as recommended by Chief Henry. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

2. Conditional Offer of Employment. Janet Sheats made a motion to extend a conditional offer of employment to the two successful candidates subject to the successful completion of drug and alcohol testing, physical, psychological, and polygraph examinations. David Hess seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

B. Manager's Report. Alice Rehrig reported the Township was successful in obtaining \$89,500 from the Northampton County Gaming Grant and \$60,987 from the Monroe County Gaming Grant for the digital radio upgrades.

C. Solicitor's Report, Attorney Backenstoe reported that Mike Muffley is working on the final draft of the data center ordinance and it should be ready for the next meeting so the formal process of adopting the ordinance can begin, which includes sending the ordinance to the LVPC for review and comment. He is also expecting to have completed his review of the noise ordinance for the next meeting; however, he will not be in attendance at that meeting.

Jerry Pritchard commented he would prefer holding off on the discussion regarding the data center ordinance until Attorney Backenstoe was present at the meeting. He has the confidence in Attorney Backenstoe that he will draft an ordinance that is in the best interest of the Township and to protect the Township. The information that is being distributed on Facebook is a matter of scare tactics and it is not right to do that to the public.

- VII. PUBLIC COMMENT. Zach Szoke provided the Board with information to substantiate the statement that has been made regarding the costs of residential development in that for every \$1 that is collected in taxes, the Township is technically paying out \$1.16 in services to the residential property. He also reminded the Board that land preservation is important to many residents and the Board should make a plan to get this on the November ballot. If the Board wants them to stop talking about land preservation, put it on the ballot, and if it is not approved, then it is done and they will stop talking about it.

Katherine Mack commented she comes to a majority of the Supervisors meetings and usually at each meeting there is a discussion about land preservation and open space. There are different opinions presented and the discussions could go on and on, some of them can become polarized. There are people who are supporters of land preservation at the Township level and are willing to pay the tax increase, others will give their voice about land preservation, but are unwilling to fund it at a Township level, and there probably are some people who don't believe in land preservation at all; but she feels the main issue that the Township Supervisors need to take into account is the people's right to voice their opinions through the ballot box. The only way to know how the constituents really feel is at the ballot box. The right to vote is essential in a well-functioning democracy. It is a fundamental right of all Americans and you are taking that away. Five people have made the decision rather than the number of voting people in the Township. The ballot box is the most effective reflection of public support or dissent. Allowing the referendum should not be feared. It should be a welcome method of addressing this issue. Votes are the only decisive and objective way of determining the will of the people. The voters voices can and should be heard, both those who agree or are opposed to the land preservation. The Board represents all the citizens of Lehigh Township. The only way to represent them the best is to allow them to voice their vote at the ballot box. There is no personal responsibility on the Board from the public if the referendum passes or it doesn't. Allow them to vote and the voters have to accept that vote. The responsibility falls on that of the voters. She would ask the Board to reconsider the referendum and give them their right to vote.

Jerry Pritchard commented he has always been a believer in the ballot box. That is the way this nation has been set up. Janet Sheats commented she took it very seriously. She stood out at the polls talking about land preservation and data centers to clear the air and let them know what it meant and what it entailed. She discovered the majority of the people did not understand what she was talking about. That is where her issue is with this. It was shocking to her that people, especially the elderly, didn't know what she was talking about. The voters need to know and understand what this is all about. She cannot put this on the ballot box until all the correct information is out there. An informed vote is crucial and important. She also believes taxes will be going up in the long run because of the lost revenue.

Katherine Mack commented there are very few people who take an ardent interest in anything that goes on unless it effects them personally. She goes to the School Board meetings and there are people who live in Moore Township and are not aware that the school is being closed and sold. People don't show an interest in what goes on beyond their household and family. What happens at the School District will affect us here. An informed public is the only way a democracy works.

Zach Szoke commented he agrees that everyone needs to be informed. They did have plans to hold meetings, get newsletters out, etc, but they stopped when the Supervisors didn't vote to put this through. That is the only reason that people do not know about this. They have had to spend the last three or four months regrouping from that. People will be informed.

Katherine Mack commented the Board adopted the Lehigh Township Comprehensive Plan which states that a major goal is to maintain the rural residential character of most of Lehigh Township. Another goal is to promote a continuation of agricultural activities and encourage additional permanent preservation of prime agricultural land. It also lists strategies that are supposed to be employed. One of them is a high priority to work with Agricultural Preservation to encourage additional property owners to apply to funding to have their land permanently preserved. She knows it means at the County level, but the Board could take it one step further and do it at the local level. Letting the people vote is an underlying responsibility. Educate the people and let them decide. The Board was elected to represent the public. The best way to represent them is to allow them to voice their opinion at the ballot box.

Tom Szoke commented he thinks there at times at meetings where the Board may feel that they are talking at them. They want to talk with the Board. If there is a different plan or goal that the Supervisors have for the Township, let them know. To him, it seems like there is a move to have more housing in the Township. If that is the plan and we want to build more houses in the area, that can be laid out, but when you look at the infrastructure of the Township, it won't work. There is nothing being done for road improvements. They at putting land preservation out there, but they are not getting any feedback, saying what is wanted. This needs to come to a vote. Mike Jones commented he thinks one of the biggest issues is once this get moved to the ballot, there will be nothing done on that end for educating the residents. Tom Szoke commented the feedback they get from the Board will get them go forward or backward with this. There needs to be a collaboration. The headbutting needs to stop. They don't want to be here fighting about things; they want to work with the Board.

David Hess commented one of his issues with this is that when this was first brought up, there was supposed to be three meetings at the fire hall, but only one occurred. Zach Szoke commented he apologizes for the lag between June and December 9<sup>th</sup>. There were

Board of Supervisor Minutes  
May 26, 2026

some health concerns that needed to be dealt with and put them back. When the vote on December 9<sup>th</sup> took place, they were hammered down and didn't know how to react to it. They are now going to be proactive and continue to get the information out about the program without any promises from the Board. They will make sure the people are informed.

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

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