

**LOWHILL TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MEETING MINUTES
JULY 1, 2021**

The Lowhill Township Board of Supervisors meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Chairman Richard Hughes. Also present were George Wessner, Jr.; Vice Chairman; Robb Werley, Supervisor; Charles Waters, Esq., Solicitor; Ryan Christman, Engineer; Brian Carl, Administrator and Secretary Jill Seymour.

After the Pledge of Allegiance, George Wessner, Jr. made a motion to approve the June 3, 2021 meeting minutes, as written. Seconded by Robb Werley. Motion carried. Robb Werley made a motion to approve the June 3, 2021 Fire Department meeting minutes, as written. Seconded by George Wessner, Jr. Motion carried. Richard Hughes made a motion to pay the monthly bills, as submitted. George Wessner, Jr. seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Robb Werley made a motion to review the Route 100 North Site – sketch – land development plan dated 5/11/2021 (7503 Kernsville Rd. Orefield). George Wessner, Jr. seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The plan is a proposed 200,000 square foot warehouse. Kestra Kelly is working with PennDot at this time. It would need a turning lane off of Kernsville Road. They would like to extend the water line and have on lot septic. They will request a to extend the waterline to the site from the Lehigh County Authority. The water line ends at Beechwood Street off of Route 100. Traffic studies have not taken place yet. They have received some feedback from PennDot. At this time, they are seeking a variance for building height. The dimensions are 36' high inside and 41' – 42' outside height. The ordinance caps at 35' outside height. Ryan Christman said there are some storm water items to take care of at this time and their proposal does meet out SALDO. Planning Commission recommended the denial of requested waivers to submit subsequent plan as preliminary/final and to reduce the 50 foot wide buffering screen. The Board has traffic concerns. Robb Werley made a motion to accept and move to preliminary. Richard Hughes seconded the motion. Motion carried. Richard Hughes made a motion to extend the water line upon approval from Lehigh County Authority. Board approval of route proposed. George Wessner, Jr. seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Richard Hughes made a motion to accept for review George & Cheree Wessner – Stone Haven – Minor Subdivision – Preliminary Plan revised – dated 5/24/2021 (7209 & 7205 Kernsville Rd, Orefield). Robb Werley seconded the motion. George Wessner, Jr. abstained. Motion carried.

The Planning Commission has favorable comments. Ryan Christman said a few minor details need to be added to the plan, storm water, etc. Richard Hughes made a motion to accept the preliminary and move to final. Robb Werley seconded the motion. George Wessner, Jr. abstained. Motion carried.

Richard Hughes made a motion to accept the Ryan & Sarah Halpin – minor subdivision – sewer planning module – 3606 Windy Road. George Wessner, Jr. seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The solicitor has no comments at this time.

Ryan Christman: Bear Road Bridge is moving along. PP&L will be getting signatures of land owners.

Brian Carl: The Sanctuary @ Haafsville would like us to sign their contract. We used to be capped at \$550 per year. They do not have the funds to cap anymore. They will bill by service. Richard Hughes made a motion to appoint the Sanctuary @ Haafsville as our animal control without the \$550 per year cap. Robb Werley seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Fire department funding: Due to the challenges our volunteer fire companies are experiencing regarding rapidly increasing expenses and lack of volunteer support, they are asking the Township to increase their annual contribution to each department. The funding model the Township currently uses has been in place since 2007 and has not been adjusted since that time. The Board agrees that an increase is warranted but is concerned that we do not have the revenue to account for the increase in our budget. One option the Board has is to implement a fire tax, which is based on assessed value. Our contribution to our volunteer fire departments should be around \$75,000, which would be split between the five fire departments. The proposed .4 or .44 mill fire tax would give us approximately \$100,000 revenue for our volunteer fire departments. We need to plan for the future of these fire departments being paid as opposed to volunteer, as volunteers are very hard to come by these days. To give a few examples of what this would cost tax payers: assessed value of \$352,400. Fire tax would be \$155.06 per year. Assessed value of \$503,500. Fire tax would be \$221.54 per year and assessed value of \$159,500. Fire tax would be \$70.18 per year. Carol Betz asked how it will be set up on the tax bill. Brian said it would be a separate line item on the bill, just like the few residents that have the hydrant tax. Elite does not collect fire tax, so someone would need to collect. Richard Hughes is not in favor of more taxes at this time. This year we are paid for all departments We budgeted \$30,000 for the fire departments and paid them equal parts of that amount. George Wessner, Jr. is against raising taxes as well, but thinks we need to look into a fire tax for 2022. He would like to see a complete plan, so we don't have to raise the tax every year. It will eventually no longer be volunteer and be paid fire departments. Brian would like a representative from each township to go to the steering committee regional meeting. There is a process for a fire tax, an ordinance would have to be passed. Keith Strohl worked on Heidelberg's fire tax. We would also need to do a press release to all residents. There is also concerns on how to divvy up what percentage each department would receive. Current contracts with our fire departments would need to be abolished. Robb's concern is that if we tax residents, he doesn't want to go over X amount of

dollars each year. He doesn't want to spend any more money than what we bring in. Brian will be the contact for Keith Strohl to iron out the details.

We have received the first half of our covid relief money from the State. We should open a bank account in order to keep track of money spent. Richard Hughes made a motion to open a checking account at New Tripoli Bank for covid relief. Robb Werley seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Joe Kalusky said in June they cut shoulders, back filled. Took trees down at Bear Road Bridge. Oil and Chip is complete for Weisenberg and has started for Lynn. Repaired sink hole, grass mowed and put up speed limit signs on Hollenbach Rd. For July they will finish oil and chip at Lynn, Heidelberg and Lowhill. Grass mow and start Valley road bridge and Spooners Road. Would like to coat the roof, it's been 6 years since it has been done.

Robb Werley asked if we are doing anything about the house on Kernsville Road that has all of the lawn mowers and is over grown. Brian Carl said that we are going to the magistrate with them and a few others.

Richard Hughes opened the floor for public comment, hearing none, he moved on with the agenda.

Robb Werley made a motion to adjourn. George Wessner, Jr. seconded the motion.

The Lowhill Township Board of Supervisors meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,