

PALMER TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
February 5, 2024
7:00 PM
GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

The Palmer Township Board of Supervisors held a general business meeting on Monday, February 5, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building meeting room. The following were in attendance: Chair Michael Brett, Supervisors K. Michael Mitchell, Jeffrey Young and Charles E. Bellis III. Supervisor Joseph Armato was absent. Also in attendance were the Township Manager, Planning Director, Assistant Planning Director, Finance Director, Police Chief, Director Public Works/Parks/Utilities, Fire Commissioner, Director of Public Services, and the Assistant Township Manager.

1. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

2. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Approval of Minutes - January 22, 2024

INFORMATION

The Board needs to approve/disapprove the minutes of January 22, 2024.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Supervisor Kendall Mitchell, Seconded by Charles Bellis III. Passed. 4-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Bellis III, Brett, Mitchell, Young

Supervisors Absent: Armato

B. Disbursement of Funds - February 5, 2024

INFORMATION

The Board needs to approve/disapprove the disbursement of funds for February 5, 2024.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Charles Bellis III, Seconded by Supervisor Jeffrey Young. Passed. 4-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Bellis III, Brett, Mitchell, Young

Supervisors Absent: Armato

3. OLD BUSINESS

A. Honoring Our Planning Commission Members

INFORMATION

The Palmer Township Board of Supervisors is fortunate to have exceptional support from its Planning Commission. Tonight we would like to honor four of our most distinguished members as they retire from the Commission and embark on new

adventures.

Robert "Bob" Blanchfield 33 years of service, from 1990-2023
Robert "Bob" Lammi 9 years of recent service, from 2014-2023
Robert "Bob" Walker 7 years of service, from 2016 to 2023
Charles "Chuck" Diefenderfer 3 years 2 months 2020-2023

We thank you for your many years of service.

DISCUSSION

Chairman Brett said, our Planning Commission is regionally known for being very attentive and they are respected in the region. A lot of that has to do with the members we are recognizing here tonight. I learned a lot from all of them. Bob Blanchfield served 33 years, Bob Lammi 9 years of recent service, Bob Walker - 7 years, and Chuck Diefenderfer - 3 years 2 months.

Supervisor Young said, I know Bob Lammi served on the Planning Commission years ago too. Bob Lammi gave his two prior terms he served in the 80's and 90's. Young said, I met Bob Walker through coaching with the Athletic Association. We coached legion baseball together and you can't find a nicer guy. He is a true gentleman and he was always the calm one. We appreciate your service and what your wife has done for the community with the YMCA. Bob Lammi was one of my mentors on this Board. When he moved to Texas for a plant startup, we talked a lot on the phone and he helped me in this position. Chuck Diefenderfer, I've known you for a long time. You lived near me growing up. Young said, Bob Blanchfield is a wealth of knowledge. We can learn from all four of these guys. They were all thorough in all that they did. Bob Lammi and Bob Blanchfield are still active on our Stormwater Authority and they both serve on the Easton Area Joint Sewer Authority. They haven't stopped giving and our community owes them a lot. I believe the way Bob Lammi and Bob Blanchfield left our Planning Commission was uncalled for and I wish you were still there. I hope all of you have a good time pointing fingers at us when you don't agree with us. You are all very knowledgeable. We need community minds that care about our community and these four always did.

Supervisor Mitchell said, I would like to thank all of you for your service. I've known all of you pretty much my whole life and I served on this Board with Bob Lammi. I wish you all the best of luck in your future endeavors.

Supervisor Bellis said, I echo what Jeff and Mike said. Me being someone that grew up in Palmer, I watched these guys help guide Palmer to where we are today. I served on the Recreation Board years ago with Bob Walker. We appreciate all of your dedication.

Township Manager, Bob Williams said, these men represent professionalism, community service, and exemplary public service. Thank you. You all left a very positive mark on Palmer Township.

Bob Blanchfield said, it was my pleasure to be a part of the Planning Commission for all those years. It was a lot of work, but I enjoyed it. It was an honor to serve as the

Chair because of the committee we had. Everyone put effort into it. Everyone came prepared and I think some of our decisions were based on them being prepared. Thank you for honoring us tonight.

Chuck Diefenderfer said, it was an enjoyable experience and I enjoyed working with the staff. We did the best we could for the township.

Brett said, I am proud to have sat next to every one of you and I learned a lot from all of you. Your patience and guidance meant a lot to me. I appreciate that.

B. Staff Reports
INFORMATION

- Solicitor
- Township Manager
- Planning Director
- Township Engineer
- Public Services Director
- Public Works, Parks and Utilities Director
- Finance Director
- Police Chief
- Fire Commissioner

Solicitor Oetinger said, he had nothing to report but we will need to have an Executive Session after tonight's meeting for litigation matters.

Township Manager Bob Williams said, I echo everyone's comments about our esteemed planning members. I would like to thank our staff and volunteers who attended the Nurture Nature Centers CREATE Resilience Forum last Thursday evening. It will be discussed later on the agenda. Palmer Township showed up in strong numbers. I also have a personnel and litigation item for executive session.

Planning Director Kent Baird said, our Planning Commission came together this past year with a new Director of Planning, Engineer and Solicitor. Without their constant availability we would have had a really tough year. Instead we are grounded and have a good understating of our files moving forward. I've enjoyed working with each of these Board members we are honoring tonight. I enjoyed their company personally and there was no one better to learn from about the township than these four men. I couldn't be happier to have had the opportunity to work with this Planning Commission.

Public Services Director Tom Adams said, Phil is absent tonight due to illness. I would like to thank these four gentlemen for all their service to Palmer Township.

Fire Commissioner, Steve Gallagher said, we receive support from our community and we also like to give back. The Fire Department purchased and donated 40 winter coats for students in need. We also had a canned food drive over the holidays where we donated over 450 pounds of food to a food bank with over 400 families fed over the holiday season.

Gallagher gave the following January incident report: We responded to 81 incidents -

40 more than January 2023. We gave mutual aid 12 times, 4 to Bethlehem Township, 1 to the City of Easton, Forks Township, Hanover Township, Lower Saucon and Plainfield Township, 3 to Lower Nazareth. We received mutual aid from Wilson Borough for one hazardous materials incident. Call types: 5 fires with two building fires, two chimney fires and one brush fire, 20 vehicle accidents, 3 EMS assists, 4 hazardous materials, and 21 false alarms. Our NFPA 1720 compliance was 7% meaning PFMD response time of ten firefighters on scene within 10 minutes was 5 of the 70 incidents.

Lastly, Gallagher noted the department received a \$16,900 grant for fire hose.

C. Animal Defenders Greater Lehigh Valley Presentation

INFORMATION

Sheryl Petrillo with Animal Defenders Greater Lehigh Valley previously made a presentation to the Board of Supervisors to consider a change to the township code to prohibit the sale of dogs, cats, rabbits, and guinea pigs in pet stores, and to prohibit the declawing of cats.

Sheryl provided ordinances recently adopted by our neighbors, Forks Township and The City of Easton.

Hal Warner, President and CEO of Lehigh Valley Humane Society and Vet Clinic has requested a decision from the Board.

DISCUSSION

Brett said, the last time this group was here we received their presentation and accepted information that we said we would take under consideration. I'd like to give the presenter a brief time to present any updates before we take action.

Hal Warner, President and CEO, Lehigh Valley Humane Society (LVHS), read a written statement. He stated the shelter has been over capacity for over a year. We have nowhere to go with these animals in the valley, yet pet stores continue to sell animals. The LVHS last year saw 1,000 more animals than prior year. It is time to stop the sale of puppy mills. The declaw ban is also up for consideration. We know declawing causes health and behavioral problems. For too long declawing was considered routine even though there is no major benefit to the cat. We are working hard to get the Lehigh Valley to protect our animals. I appreciate your consideration of the alternatives we've presented to the Board.

Young said, I didn't know you served our area? When did you become Lehigh Valley? Warner said about a year ago. Mitchell asked, isn't this regulated by the state or the federal governments? Warner said, unfortunately not. There are lobby groups trying to pass these with local communities.

Oetinger asked, wasn't a bill just passed expressly allowing this. Warner said, the material I handed out will have that. Oetinger said, Pet Stores have to file with the state. Warner said, there are a lot of new dog laws. Oetinger said, there is a pet shop kennel license that allows for the sale of dogs. I have a hard time advising this Board

when a Pet Shop is selling within the township and they have a license. Oetinger said, we are preempted given a law that went into affect 13 days ago. Warner said, I don't believe you are. Oetinger said, I disagree.

Charles Diefenderfer, 2918 Hay Terrace said, I've adopted a lot of pets, most in the past from the SPCA. I have an issue with not having my cat declawed. I'm diabetic and I don't need a cat with claws that could cause me to get an infection. You said, the Vet doesn't promote it any longer. I'd rather have a Vet make that decision. I don't agree with you putting this decision on this Board. Warner said, it is a barbaric practice. Diefenderfer said, if you want to put a cat to sleep you way the alternative; either death or declawing. I think it is wrong if the Township passes an ordinance on that.

Stephany Gallagher, 402 Newlins Mill Road, Forks Township said she is the President of FURR which has been around for 21 years. She said when a cat loses its first defense of claws, it uses its second defense which is to fight. She read information from groups that do not support declawing. She went on to describe the declawing procedure which includes taking the first knuckle and it causes arthritis and it is painful. She went on to talk about the life of the cats and the affects of declawing. She said, there are 33 Universities and Vet Schools and only three now teach declawing. As we evolve and realize and learn new things and you find a practice you used to do is not ethically ok, you change. More and more Vets are refusing to declaw. We are moving on. The United States is the only country that declaws cats. We need to do the right thing. Allentown, Easton and Forks have decided they no longer want to do it. There is a bill in front of the state, but they aren't moving quickly. You are in a unique position to say you aren't going to mutilate cats in Palmer Township and I encourage you to make that decision.

Mitchell said, you are only talking about cats. Gallagher said yes, I'm presenting the declawing portion of the presentation. We have two ordinances before you, banning declawing and to not allow selling of animals in pet shops that are selling them from puppy mills. Mitchell said, I don't see how we can stop the dogs from being sold. We can't tell a business in our township what they can't do. It's up to the state.

Oetinger said, this is a new law that was just enacted 13 days ago. The dog licensure regulates the sales of dogs and is pretty robust. I'm not going to advise my Board when in the township there is a store selling dogs. I would be committing malpractice if I said jump into this and take charge. Oetinger added, respective to declawing, in terms of enforcement, how are you enforcing this? Gallagher asked, how do you enforce any other ordinance. Oetinger said, I don't believe the same enforcement can take place at medical facilities versus seeing where a shed is built. I don't know that we can send our Code Enforcement Officers out doing sting operation at Veterinary offices. Gallagher said, in Easton, Forks and Allentown they are handling it with complaints that would come in. Gallagher said, you have three Vets already in your township that aren't declawing and you can prevent them from moving into the township. Oetinger said, we can't prevent them from moving in, just declawing.

Young asked, how many Vets in the Lehigh Valley declaw? Gallagher said, we are in a national Vet shortage. There are new colleges opening in 2025 because of the shortage due to retirement, Vets leaving the field, and not enough coming into the

field. All the new Vets coming in weren't taught to declaw. Young again asked, how many in the Lehigh Valley declaw? Gallagher said, I don't know. Young said, I'm not interested in passing either of these ordinances.

Sheryl Petrillo, Lower Saucon Township, with Animal Defenders Greater Lehigh Valley, said she can talk about the pet store ordinance. I'm familiar with the dog law. The Victoria's Law is not moving anywhere. They enacted a new dog law strictly about dogs. It might require kennels to share where their animals are coming from. What is happening at a pet shop is not illegal, it is highly unethical. In the Lehigh Valley we have shelters that are over run with animals, cats, dogs, and guinea pigs. The pet store is selling from puppy mills from out west. Brett asked if she had anything new to offer from your last presentation. Petrillo said, should you take action tonight to table, I hope you are compassionate enough to learn more and do the right thing for animals and consumers.

Young asked, do you support euthanasia? Warner said, we support humane euthanasia. Petrillo said, there is no relevance. I'm sure the pet shop will sue you. We are trying to support the animals.

Darnell Scott, 2190 Gateway Terrace, said he is here on behalf of Easton Council Woman Sultana. Oetinger said, usually comments are from Palmer Township residents. Scott said he will read as a resident of Palmer Township. He read a letter about the declawing process and banning it in Palmer Township.

Caitlin MacKenzie, 2227 Rising Hill Road, Whitehall Township, said she is involved with Peaceable Kingdom Animal Shelter. You also spoke about rabbits and guinea pigs. We receive them after they are purchased at pet stores and they end up being neglected. People aren't given proper knowledge on taking care of these animals. When you stop the sale in pet stores it will decrease the animals coming into the shelters. She went on to read a statement as to how it applies to rescue groups.

Rose LoPiccolo said she is the Director of The Center for Animal Health and Welfare that is in your backyard. I understand why your attorney may suggest being against the pet store ordinance, but I see the animals that come out of the pet store. We see the dogs and kittens. We see them stuck in our shelters for years. They have behavioral problems. It's important to see the work we do. We don't have the funding to keep up with these animals coming into our no kill shelters. There is a huge strain on our resources. The community behind me here tonight are here to try to educate you and ask for your support. I invite you to come to the shelter and see the issues we see with these animals that were dumped by people that didn't care. The laws are not being enforced and we are hemorrhaging resources. The people producing these lives aren't doing their work and we have to rescue them.

Mitchell asked, how do you know they are coming from puppy mills? Piccolo said, they come from both. I have paperwork that states they come from the pet stores. People who own them say they can't handle them because they don't know how to take care of them. They aren't fixed, they don't have their shots. The pet store isn't following up.

Young said, I believe this is the first time you are here, but it's the third time some of

the others have been before us. Our lack of enactment should have sent a signal. My feelings are already made up. If we aren't funding you, I would like to visit your location and would consider future funding.

Supervisor Young made a motion to deny the request to adopt the two recommended ordinances.

Motion: Deny, Moved by Supervisor Jeffrey Young, Seconded by Supervisor Michael Brett. Passed. 4-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Bellis III, Brett, Mitchell, Young

Supervisors Absent: Armato

D. Nurture Nature CREATE Resilience Hub Project Update

INFORMATION

Steve Gallagher and Kent Baird will update the Board on Palmer Township's attendance at the Nurture Nature meeting that was held on Thursday, February 1, 2024.

DISCUSSION

Young asked to spend two minutes to explain what the goal is here. Gallagher gave a brief summary noting the objective is to create resilience against floodplain issues and other natural disasters. It is collecting data of what the community needs are and will address what we need to focus on for resiliency. Gallagher said, the process started back in November 2022. We are now in the final stages. On November 15, 2022 it was introduced to municipal leaders. Bob Williams and I attended that meeting where they were looking for partnerships. Palmer Township agreed to participate in January 2023. It was the first of three meetings to discuss the responsibilities of municipalities. The second meeting was held in February 2023, where funding opportunities were discussed. We received the Hazardous Mitigation Grant, as well as a grant HRG will be filing for Meadow Avenue. In February 2023 there were two Easton High School interns that interviewed me, and a few other of our staff to understand our community and what the project is about. In March 2023 the third meeting was held to discuss climate change in Pennsylvania. In May 2023, Paige Strasko attended a presentation by Bushkill Township on open space. There was a December 2023 meeting to discuss community involvement. We shared a weblink to an interactive map where anyone can note a location and comment about areas of concern. A template was also identified requesting our resiliency concerns, which is addressed in our Hazard Mitigation Plan. On February 1, 2024, many members of the township staff and our volunteers attended the latest meeting. Kent will address what was covered that night.

Baird said, we want to build the topic of resiliency into our planning process. All our departments are communicating together. He reviewed the Nurture Nature Center project team and a create resilience mural. There were six or seven municipalities that attended and Palmer had ten people that attended. We want to be ready, responsive and resilient and we are moving forward being led by Steve. I'm the alternate and

working with Paige and Craig. At the last meeting we broke out into teams. Future meeting dates will take place in March, May, June, and July, and by then, we hope to have a finalized plan. We hope to be a host and be on display. The artist will create something special for Palmer and it will be on display in July. Baird said, we are happy to attend and happy to help Steve with this process. Baird offered the link to the website where anyone can note a place of concern on a map. The link was also shared on Palmer's social media sites and the township website.

Bellis asked, will this tie into our Stormwater Authority? Baird said, this will tie into everything we do with stormwater. In addition to educating our community it will help us discuss solutions throughout other municipalities. It is open to more than just us. Bellis said his concern is that we are having overkill and duplication. Baird said, the Authority will get all the information from Paige. Young said, we are putting a lot of dollars into this and I understand the concern for redundancy.

Gallagher said, we get recommendations from the Nurture Nature Center and we will bring any recommendations back to you that we may be interested in implementing. Bellis said, I saw a lot of this in the HRG presentation. Assistant Planning Director, Craig Beavers said, one good thing is at the end of this it will give us recommendations for a resiliency plan. It will show us things that will help us for all types of future disasters. It is more encompassing and includes things like shade issues, extreme weather events. It isn't just flooding.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Chapter 147 Sewer Code Ordinance Update - Request to Advertise INFORMATION

In 2023 we tasked Entech Engineering with updating our tapping fee ordinance, (completed and adopted on June 19, 2023) as well as reviewing our "Chapter 147 Sewer Use Code" and offering comments for updating. The current update offered for review and approval for advertising, addresses outdated items such as, references to the Palmer Township Municipal Sewer Authority; Definitions that were duplicated and varied in the individual duplication; areas where fees were mentioned and were outdated, were updated to reference the "current Township Fee Schedule"; clearing up areas where there was too much room for interpretation, such as illegal connections to include sump pump connections and a home's down spout runs.

DISCUSSION

Oetinger said that he received comments from Dan Lichtenwalner today, but nothing is substantial. If you want to approve for advertising, I would suggest it be subject to reconciliation of his comments.

Public Works Director, Scott Kistler, said it is not time sensitive. The Board asked to have the ordinance cleaned up and to bring back to the next meeting.

Supervisor Bellis made a motion to defer until the next Board meeting.

Motion: Defer, Moved by Charles Bellis III, Seconded by Supervisor Michael

Brett. Passed. 4-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Bellis III, Brett, Mitchell, Young

Supervisors Absent: Armato

B. Radar Speed Sign Presentation and Discussion

INFORMATION

Phillip Godbout will make a presentation to the Board regarding Radar Speed Signs.

DISCUSSION

Public Services Director Tom Adams said, the Public Services Department was tasked with gathering information about radar speed signs. The signs post your speed limit and flash if you are going faster than the posted speed. Adams presented a handout showing the Bethman Road sign in Bethlehem Township and provided bullet points Phil Godbout provided listing benefits. Adams said, they are very effective with traffic calming. It is shown that most people typically slow down when they see the signs. They also have a monitoring device that records information. Anything installed would have to meet PennDOT requirements. They encourage voluntary speed reduction and can reduce demands on local police. Adams said the Board's packet also includes pictures of signs in Nazareth Borough that he said is not too robust of a system.

Adams said, the information provided tonight includes a more substantial pole and is more resistant to wind loads. The total cost of one sign is approximately \$7,500. Young said, I thought they were around \$3,000 per sign. Adams said, that doesn't include the pole, the foundation and the installation costs. Adams said, a steel channel sign may work in some municipalities, but I think we should go with the more substantial quote. Adams said, both signs shown are Elancity devices.

Young said, this estimate says \$17,500 for six signs. Is that for the signs you want to get? Adams said, this is all for your consideration. Young asked, are these the signs you are looking to put in? Mitchell said, we can't put them in at this price. Brett said, the \$17,500 is for the units, not installation. Young said, I've heard that people that drive past them just start to ignore them.

Chief Wayne Smith said, what Tom and Phil are suggesting are signs at fixed locations. We currently have signs that are temporary and we can move them based on residents complaints. We would be able collect the data from our current signs to determine best places for fixed locations. Young asked, will it be helpful? Smith said, yes. We could download that information to determine hot spots to assign our traffic details.

Adams said, with the portable signs, typically when they are there they are effective, but when removed the drivers return to their old habits. Bellis read specs that said there is a 25% result to calm the traffic. I think we should look at areas near our schools, churches, and parks as a start, to control speed in those areas. After three month's run a report and give it to the Chief. I think they are great. There is one at the

top of College Hill. The complaint I got during my campaign trail was always about traffic.

Chief Smith said, a year ago we asked for an upgrade to our new solar panel portable signs. The trailer we currently tow it with is also obsolete and we are purchasing a new trailer that we budgeted for. Young asked about the size of the trailer. Smith said, it is the same size as what we have now, it's just new. Bellis said, I believe more permanent signs would be good. Brett asked if we know the six specific locations? Adams said, that is just a number we came up with. The Police Department would make a recommendation to the Traffic Safety Committee and then we would come to this Board with the suggested locations. Adams said, our Public Works Department could install them or we could hire a contractor.

Bellis recommended we proceed with this and bring a listing of where they should be installed with more details back to the Board. Mitchell said, we don't have it budgeted to do this year. Brett said, we could budget for next year if everyone agrees. Adams said, they also require a 700 foot straightaway. Bellis said, I'd recommend having them close to our bike paths, if possible.

Williams asked, who is doing what, when and where? Bellis said, get a list to us with how many you would like and where. Mitchell said, get the final prices.

Oetinger asked if they are through COSTARS? Adams said, I got the company name off the sign. It is an outfit in New York City. There might be COSTAR providers for this. Brett said, it sounds like the Board is supportive. Williams said, we agree we want them sturdy. We don't want solar panels flying around our township. The Traffic Safety Committee will review the proposed locations, coordinate with Scott Kistler and then come back to this Board. Young said, we probably should start with one or two signs to see if we think it's working.

Brett said, at our next meeting maybe you can find us one location we can do for a test run. Chief suggested Van Buren Road. Williams said, we can find money for two signs. Bellis said, maybe one on Van Buren Road and one on Tatamy.

Mitchell made a motion to move forward with collecting information for two permanent speed signs and to bring back location recommendations and bring it back to our next meeting.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Supervisor Kendall Mitchell, Seconded by Charles Bellis III. Passed. 4-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Bellis III, Brett, Mitchell, Young

Supervisors Absent: Armato

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ruthann Cardell, 379 Stones Crossing said she was here last month and I was told to direct my question to Jeff. I received my tax bill with the .25 mills for EMS and we also received a

letter for our annual subscription. Why are we getting a subscription invoice when we are now paying .25 mills in tax. Young said, the subscription gets you \$500 off any emergency call each year. If you have repetitive calls, it allows for discounts. The money we asked for was based on that subscription staying in place. The subscriptions get us \$400,000 a year. We are trying to fill a hole. I guess I should have brought that up at the time. Cardell said, I don't believe it was made clear enough that it would be both. Young said, if we only have half of it, we are in trouble. Cardell said, but the money doesn't stay in Palmer, it goes to other areas. Young said, it depends on what we do. We have nine out of nineteen communities contributing this year. We will have to adjust our capital improvements. This problem started for us in 2019 where we couldn't keep up with our emergency responses. We have trucks with over 330,000 miles on them. We keep them up, but we would like to get them off the streets. Young said, we had several folks call about the .25 mill. For the average home in Palmer Township the .25 mill represents about \$18 a year.

6. REPORTS

Supervisors

Bellis said, last Monday I had breakfast with Chief Smith. That man represents the Police Department, but he also represents Palmer Township above and beyond. I saw two Veterans thank him for his service. When the Chief told him he was in the Navy, they shook hands. On our way out two tables stopped the Chief to say thanks. A seven year old shook his hand. You represent and we appreciate what you do. Chief said, thank you.

Young said, I saw one of the Public Works staff putting up the tree city signs. They are so efficient. Kistler said, thank you, I will pass that on to them.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m. with litigation and one personnel item for executive session.

Motion: Adjourn, Moved by Supervisor Kendall Mitchell, Seconded by Charles Bellis III. Passed. 4-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Bellis III, Brett, Mitchell, Young

Supervisors Absent: Armato

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda DeGerolamo
Assistant Township Manager