

PALMER TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
August 1, 2022
7:00 PM
GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

The Palmer Township Board of Supervisors held a general business meeting on Monday, August 1, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building meeting room. The following were in attendance: Chairman Jeffrey Young, Vice Chairman Michael Brett, Supervisors K. Michael Mitchell, Ann-Marie Panella and Joseph Armato. Also in attendance were the Township Manager, Police Chief, Public Services Director, Director of Public Works/Parks/Utilities, Fire Commissioner, Township Solicitor, and the Assistant Township Manager.

1. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

2. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Approval of Minutes - July 26, 2022

INFORMATION

The Board needs to approve/disapprove the minutes of July 26, 2022.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Supervisor Ann-Marie Panella, Seconded by Supervisor Kendall Mitchell. Passed. 5-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Armato, Brett, Mitchell, Panella, Young

B. Single Disbursement of Funds - August 1, 2022

INFORMATION

The Board needs to approve/disapprove the disbursement of funds.

DISCUSSION

Young said this is a single disbursement for \$110.25.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Supervisor Michael Brett, Seconded by Supervisor Ann-Marie Panella. Passed. 5-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Armato, Brett, Mitchell, Panella, Young

C. Disbursement of Funds - August 1, 2022

INFORMATION

The Board needs to approve/disapprove the disbursement of funds for August 1, 2022.

DISCUSSION

Young said the second disbursement is for a total of \$126,776.68.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Supervisor Kendall Mitchell, Seconded by Supervisor Joseph Armato. Passed. 5-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Armato, Brett, Mitchell, Panella, Young

3. OLD BUSINESS

A. Kiwanis Youth Center Update

INFORMATION

Victor Scomillio will be in attendance to provide an update to the Board on the Kiwanis Youth Center project.

DISCUSSION

Victor Scomillio said he is before the Board tonight on behalf of the Palmer Youth Center Committee and I'm here to provide you with an update on our progress to date. We are proud of the progress we've made so far. As some history, I was the President of the Palmer Kiwanis and we are approaching our 50th anniversary year. Our members talked about what we could do to make a splash in the community that we could leave to the township for years to come. I had spoken to Supervisor Panella and Mr. Colver and we discussed revamping the township's old field house. Our members weren't satisfied with just upgrading the building for athletics. They wanted something that would benefit all ages and interests of our community and that is how the second floor community room got added. At first the Kiwanis pledged \$100,000 toward the project, but later increased our contribution to \$150,000, which made us proud to call it the Palmer Township Kiwanis Youth Center. I took on a leadership role of the 501(c)(3) that was formed for the project.

As of Friday, we have receive \$813,265 in cash donations and another \$427,500 of in-kind donations for a total of \$1,240,765. The budget has changed since we started due to various circumstances that we didn't anticipate and we revamped our total budget to \$1,600,000. That leaves us with a shortfall of \$359,235 dollars. We have seen an increase in the past weeks and we received additional \$35,000 pledged. I've had some discussions with other potential donors that could exceed or match that.

Scomillio said, this Friday we submitted for a Keystone Community Grant for \$100,000. That is earmarked for the exterior stucco work that is estimated to cost \$112,000 with prevailing wages. We would like to get that done before the weather changes. We also have \$46,000 from a NORCO grant still to be used. Our more immediate aspect is to install all the exterior doors. That cost is \$60,000 and we have placed a deposit for them at half the total cost. We want exterior doors in and installed before we would be starting the inside work. The mechanical and plumbing are roughed in now. You may have seen on social media that The Home Depot was out and put the first coat of primer on the drywall and block walls. A company is donating their services to finish painting the second and third coats. The drywall and spackling is done. All of the labor for the drywall and spackling was donated and will be taken off their bill and returned to the Youth Center.

Scomillio said, he would like to commend Tom, Scott, and their staff on all the work that's been done outside of the building. They've done a great job in getting all of that

work completed. Kudos to them for their hard work. We are moving forward with fundraising. It is not easy in today's environment and we are trying to hit all of our resources and we are starting to get some positive feedback. We believe when the community sees the building coming to life, people may want to get involved. Any help you may have, please let me know. We would be happy to make phone calls and follow up on your behalf.

Young said, he would also like to thank Scott and Tom. It is crazy how fast you turned that outside work around. Thank you to you, your staff, and everyone that had a hand in this. Scomillio said, you will see us at community weekend. We will be handing out cards with a QR code for people to find the link to be able to donate. Williams said, he would echo what Chairman Young said. Tom, Scott, and the Public works staff have done a great job. We lost a half day Friday and again today due to rain. We are looking forward to Wednesday or Thursday for the asphalt to be done. The UGI line is in and good to go.

Young said, I appreciate what you are doing as well, Victor. Young said, he and Mike Brett met with Brian Panella and Victor about a month ago when we discussed the township doing the outside work and them finishing the inside of the building. Scomillio thanked the Board for their cooperation. I will be happy when the fundraising is done and we can all celebrate together.

B. Reflective Property Identification Sign Ordinance Discussion
INFORMATION

This item was initially reviewed and discussed at the June 13, 2022, Board of Supervisors meeting. At that time, the Board asked the Palmer Township emergency services team to go back and make some revisions to the ordinance. This revised ordinance removes the numbers to be installed on a green reflective sign – which seemed to be the biggest complaint. Building numbers would be required to be four-inch reflective numbers on a contrasting background and located in one of four approved locations.

Fire Commissioner Steve Gallagher will be present to answer any questions on the proposed ordinance.

If the Board approves the ordinance, approval to advertise for future adoption is requested.

DISCUSSION

Gallagher said, the change is for four inch reflective numbers on a contrasting background. They can be placed on the mailbox, front entrance door if it is 30-feet from the roadway, a front porch post, or on a stand alone post or pole. Young said, in the age of cell phones and GPS systems, why do we need this? Gallagher said, the GPS system takes us to the general area, not an exact location and I don't have a passenger in my vehicle to monitor a GPS system. The system we use is "I am Responding." It takes us to the general location. Young said, Waze gives you the exact location. Gallagher said, "I am Responding" doesn't communicate with Waze. Mitchell asked if residents will have a certain amount of time to do it. Gallagher said, they will have six months. Armato said, when we had this in Tannersville we gave the

residents six months. It was very effective. Young asked who will enforce it. Gallagher said, he will since it is part of the fire ordinance. Panella said, in my block there are two houses, one is 15 and one is 21.

Supervisor Armato made a motion to authorize the ordinance for adoption at an upcoming meeting. Supervisor Mitchell seconded the motion, and it was agreed by all.

David Blackstone, 24 Moor Drive, said he is the President of the Highlands of Glenmoor's Homeowners Association. We have 251 homes in our development. We understand the need for these signs, but I find the ordinance confusing and ambiguous as to what is needed. Blackstone showed the Board a sample of the signs on every home in the Highlands that had a white reflective background and black numbers. We just upgraded all our numbers a few years ago out of consideration for emergency vehicles. We are a high density community and the sign is in the same place on every home by the garage. The individual homes with mailboxes have numbers on them, but they are not four inches. We would have to change every sign in our community when we already have signs that are more than satisfactory. We aren't the only homes in Palmer this will affect. We think you really have to take a look at this further. It is much too restrictive and it doesn't fit our community who is already doing a good job identifying our homes. Blackstone said, Section A states the distance should be six-feet from the road. Section E gives you other options. Section F talks about retroreflectivity having to meet PennDOT standards. I tried today to find the PennDOT standards and I couldn't find it anywhere. If you buy a number, do you think it will state it is by PennDOT standards? It would be almost impossible for the average homeowner to identify that. For our Association, it will cost a fair amount of money and time to comply when we already have satisfactory signs. Young asked what retroreflectivity is? Gallagher explained that retroreflectivity may dissipate over time.

Mike Leahy, 40 Edinbergh Drive, in the Highlands said, Section E states they need to be four inch numbers. Our mailboxes can't handle four-inch numbers. There is only two to two and a half inches where a number could be located. All doors in our community are more than 30-feet from the roadway. The 30-foot setback is to the garages. Stand alone posts may work in the Pocono's. They are effective in certain scenarios where properties have larger frontages and significant setbacks. If we put up 251 pole signs in our front lawns, it will break down one guideline for what we want our community to look like. We don't want posts up along the streets.

Young said, at my house my lettering is on my mailbox and I'm not sure if any homes have 30-feet to the front of the home. Young said, after hearing what they have to say, I think I'd like to make sure it is understood that a sign like what the Highlands have would be okay. Gallagher said, it appears there signs may be okay. Brett said, there is a portion allowing waivers in the ordinance. Young suggested possible wording for four-inch numbers or similar, if acceptable by the Commission. I don't want to see 500-people requesting waivers. Young also suggested that maybe the 30-feet should be 40-feet.

Supervisor Panella made a motion to rescind the prior approval to advertise the ordinance and have the Fire Commission draft another revision to bring back to the

Board. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Brett.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Supervisor Ann-Marie Panella, Seconded by Supervisor Michael Brett. Passed. 5-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Armato, Brett, Mitchell, Panella, Young

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Hollo Road Sinkhole Repair Discussion

INFORMATION

The township continues to have issues with the Hollo Road Sinkhole. The Township Geotechnical Engineer, Shawn Casey, Public Works Director, Scott Kistler, and Public Services Director, Tom Adams, will be in attendance to update the Board and answer questions concerning the short-term emergency repairs and long-term requirements to stabilize Hollo Road.

To date the township has expended \$357,959.51. Additional emergency funding of \$398,979.00 is required to stabilize the box culvert and bridge over Hollo Road. Additionally, the long term repair will unfortunately require the bridge replacement with current and up-to-date construction standards at a cost that will exceed \$1,000,000.00.

DISCUSSION

Williams said, we continue to have issues with Hollo Road and are having issues stabilizing the sinkhole. To date we've spent \$357,000 and now we need an additional \$398,000 to be able to stabilize the box culvert. Long term we will require a bridge replacement that will exceed \$1 million. We don't need a vote tonight since it is an emergency repair, but we are making you aware that we will have an \$800,000 bandaid in repairs, and then we will still need a replacement in the next few years. This area, as we all know, is sinkhole prone. We know about sinkhole issues near Amazon and PennDOT has been having issues on Route 33 for years. Route 33 will be closing in both directions when PennDOT comes up with a new engineering plan. This whole area from Route 191, Route 33 through Amazon and down Van Buren Road and Hollo Road is a challenge.

Shawn Casey, the Township Geotechnical Engineer, said he has been working with Palmer Township as your consultant for 11-years. I've worked with Bethlehem Township for 20-years and have been working on sinkholes for over 33-years. I've seen 3,500 sinkholes, and this one by far is the worst one I've dealt with. The whole mile around Main Street has high quality limestone degradation from acid rain. Casey explained the process that takes place that opens the limestone. Casey said there are multiple quarries in the area that are pumping water. When they lose power the water rises back up within an hour. Then they draw down water again with pumps. This pulls water out of the fractures and has created caverns under this area. Duke, Amazon, UPS, and EXPO, since built six or seven years ago, have spent \$2.5 million to fix them. They can't get the basin stabilized. Hollo Road is right in the middle of this. The quarry blasts every other week and it seems we get a new sinkhole. Last fall the wingwall detached from the box culvert. We were able to stabilize it for six months and

then it started again this spring. The sinkholes are now moving downstream and away from the box culvert and the box culvert has fundamental faults from when it was built. Casey then explained the process that would be used for a new box culvert if installed today.

Casey said, there are sections washed out underneath the existing box culvert. The money needed now is to seal the joints of the box culvert so no water can go under it and wash it out. This will give us time to create a new design and get it permitted and installed. Mitchell asked why we wouldn't do it right now. Casey said, it will take a year to year and a half to design it and then get it permitted. This road has a lot of truck traffic. Casey said, we need to put a bandaid on it now to protect as much as we can, and then that will allow us time to design and permit and install a new culvert. A prefabricated culvert would be brought in and it would be a relatively quick procedure.

Kistler said, we did consider terminating the road and making cul-de-sacs on both sides, but when you look at the traffic traveling that road and the importance of the truck traffic, it didn't make sense. Kistler said, this \$400,000 is to buy us enough time to be able to design a new culvert and not have to stop the flow of current traffic. We should only have to close for a three month period to replace the existing culvert.

Armato asked, how long will the bandaid last? Casey said, we chose a flexible product to allow the culverts to move and then a steel plate would go over the top so debris wouldn't come through. Armato asked if he has done this before? Casey said, not in this situation, but it is good for water and acids. Armato said, we could spend \$400,00 now and again several months be down the same road. Casey said, unfortunately we can't predict sinkholes. Armato asked, how long will it take to expedite? Casey said, it will be a months worth of work and it will not impact traffic. All the work is done from underneath the culvert and downstream. Young asked, when was Hollo Road rebuilt? Kistler said, in the mid 1980's the initial culvert went in. Then when the north end was developed, extensions were added on to the existing box culvert. Kistler added, the original culvert hasn't budged, it's the extensions that were added on later that is giving us grief at this time. Young asked, is it the water or trucks making it move? Casey said, it is all water. Young asked, if the culvert is in tact, why can't we just replace the extensions. Casey said, there is no way to attach them properly to keep it from moving and separating again. Kistler said, the only answer is to put all new in. Casey said, we are not sure another box culvert is the answer. We will take a look at an arch and traditional abutments. There are multiple options. Young said, PennDOT can't keep Route 33 intact. Casey said, we know that we have rock within 20-feet of this and we know the span is much bigger with larger impacts. Young said, we have to have older culverts in this township. Casey said, the 100-year old culverts were made much better than the 30-year old culverts.

Bruno asked if anyone was able to determine whether there are any third party entities that are a cause of this problem, besides mother nature? Casey said, it is clearly related to the water going up and down and the water going through is higher than in years past. Casey said, there are weep holes and the water level is going through these weep holes. We are now plugging off the weep holes. It is hard to draw a direct line in sinkhole territory. Bruno said, he is trying to identify if it is completely a township problem or have others contributed to this. Casey said, it is all part of the geology in this area. The Wind Gap area was created by a glacier and the wash that came

through 10,000 years ago opened up all these fractures. When the glacier receded, it left loose material over top of it. That is why the limestone is good for cement making and road building, but as developers build ponds we are now getting closer to the rocks that have these fractures. Bruno asked if there is any form of emergency relief? Adams said he will be sending letters to State Senators and Representatives offices requesting assistance.

Williams said, we are not looking for a vote. We didn't want to spend \$400,000 without you knowing about it, but we need it now so we can get to tomorrow and beyond. There are no guarantees. If we don't act now, there is a high propensity we will have bigger issues. Casey said, in this case the township owns the bridge. Williams said, the repairs will be done with emergency funding.

Bill Hartin, 1375 Van Buren Road, said, you referred to it moving downstream. What does that mean? Casey explained that we have a hole in the stream where it was taking water. When we fill with low fill or concrete, a new one opens up further down the stream and it's moving away from the bridge. Kistler said, it's moved about 20-feet over the past 10-months. Hartin said, my property and Mr. Graack's property is downstream. Over the past five to 10-years the frequency of sinkholes on our properties has increased. We've filled in to save our driveway five to ten times. Are the bandaid's you are proposing going to move the problem through areas of my property, or will it solve the downstream properties issues? Casey said, you are seeing a lot of ebb and flow on your property as well. There are also issues on the Prologis property that we are telling them they need to repair. Hartin said, in the past two days the stream went from a full flow to nothing tonight. Hartin asked if there is any recourse we may have through the State or other parties involved to cover the costs we have to incur to address these issue. Casey said, he didn't know, but there may be money from the state available.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Lahey, 40 Edinburgh, said related to the southern path for the sinkholes. There is probability it will go on Prologis and the next parcel is Chrin's property on corner of Van Buren and Hollo Road. Then there is the 1492 Van Buren Road property being under consideration for warehouses or something. Lahey suggest the Board keep this information in front of their craniums when considering that project.

6. REPORTS

Solicitor

Bruno said, as you are aware, tomorrow is the Zoning Hearing for review of the Zoning Hearing Board appeal and the Cease and Desist order for Building #2 at Palmer Point. You have a right to act as a party in that matter. Based on prior directives from this Board to defend litigation, you may want me to appear and oppose.

Mitchell made a motion authorizing the Solicitor to participate at the Zoning Hearing proceedings for Palmer Point on August 2, 2022.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Supervisor Kendall Mitchell, Seconded by Supervisor Joseph Armato. Passed. 5-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Armato, Brett, Mitchell, Panella, Young
Bruno had one litigation matter for executive session.

Public Services Director

Adams said he wanted to publicly thank Scott Kistler and his department for helping out with all the site work at the Palmer Athletic Complex. They've done a tremendous job.

Supervisors

Young thanked Scott Kislter and his team for their efforts at the Palmer Athletic Complex.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m. with one litigation item for executive session.

Motion: Adjourn, Moved by Supervisor Kendall Mitchell, Seconded by Supervisor Ann-Marie Panella. Passed. 5-0.

Supervisors voting Ayes: Armato, Brett, Mitchell, Panella, Young

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda DeGerolamo
Assistant Township Manager