

**LOWER MOUNT BETHEL TOWNSHIP  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MINUTES – AUGUST 7, 2023 @ 7:00 P.M.**

**CALL TO ORDER CALL TO ORDER:** The August 7, 2023, regular meeting of the Lower Mount Bethel Township Board of Supervisors was held in person at 6984 S. Delaware Drive, Martins Creek, Pennsylvania, 18063 (formerly known as Centerfield School), Martins Creek, PA, 18063. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson DeBerardinis at 7:00 p.m. In attendance were M. DeBerardinis, S. Disidore, S. Newman, J. Mauser, S. Burns, P. North (zoom) J. Smethers and M. Mastrogiovanni. There were approximately 30 members of the audience present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Executive Session** – An executive session was held on Thursday, July 20, 2023. No action was taken.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 10, 2023. MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by S. Newman to approve the minutes as amended. Vote: 5-0.

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

**1. Fire Company**

- a. **Request for Grill-top at Centerfield. MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by J. Mauser to approve purchase of the 48” gas countertop griddle for the Centerfield Kitchen. Vote: 5-0.
- b. **Truck replacement – 2644.** J. Larrison explained their 2008 Ford F350 truck is their most used truck being it’s certified for QRS and responds to all the medical calls; roughly 80-100 per year, and calls for trees down, traffic control, flooding, fires and accidents. The box is rusting out and has an exhaust leak. Replacement they are looking at a 2024 ¾ ton crew cab 4x4 Ram pickup up with a utility cap and cargo bed slide. Cost is \$88,252.00 which includes cap, bed slide, lights, siren console charger with install, lettering and stripping. They currently have \$26,188.47 in Capital purchase fund with another \$10,00 going in shortly and \$14,057.24 in the truck fund. Fidelity Bank gave them a payment figure of \$993.53 per month to finance the \$49,000. The 2021 pumper was paid off this year, that frees up \$7,722.11 per year.

Other possible grant purchases: Firehouse subs lightweight brush / rescue gear – coveralls are 20 years old, cost \$20,286.00 – grant is 100%, PA State & Northampton County First Responders Grants to replace 1200 ft. of 1 ¾ attack hose, 600 ft. 2 ½ attach hose and 2000 ft of 5 in supply hose. Current hose is 15 years – 24 years old. NFPA says hose has a 10 year life span. Cost - \$24,935.00 – grants should cover 100%. LSA Grant with Township new Bush truck – cost about \$350,000.00. Jeff discussed with the BOS if the Township would consider a fire tax. Some Municipalities put it on the ballot; but some just budget the fire tax. This would be a good time to consider this tax with budget time approaching. The Board asked Jeff to write an article for the Newsletter about how much time was spent using the fire equipment for flood victims. S. Newman thanked the Fire Company for all their efforts and putting the dinner together for the flood victim residents.

2. **J. Matthews** – Geraldine Ct. Mr. Matthews had asked to be on the agenda regarding a township tax freeze for senior citizens. Geraldine Ct. J. Smethers explained she did some preliminary research and the information she found regarding a tax freeze in Allegheny County & Philadelphia. They are a 1<sup>st</sup> class & 2<sup>nd</sup> class County. We are a 3<sup>rd</sup> class and she couldn’t find anything for a 3<sup>rd</sup> class County as far as a tax freeze.

J. Zator had mentioned at the last meeting he doesn't think legally we can do this.  
S. Newman mentioned this is something that he might want to inquire with the County Revenue Department. J. Smethers will reach out to Scott Coburn from PSATS to see if he has any information.

3. **Chris Yaeger – Del Haven Rd.** Mr. Yaeger thanked and commended all the efforts of the Board of Supervisors, Fire Company and Road Department during the storm and clean up. He expressed his gratitude for the dinner the Fire Company had for the residents.
4. **Elaine Rodriguez – 6800 Upper Mud Run Rd.** Her private bridge was clogged with debris from the piping from the Capp Road culvert that washed away during the storm. Parts of the piping are also all over her property. She asked if LMBT Road Dept. could clean it up, they can go thru the Counterman's property. M. DeBerardinis said the Road crew will clean it up this week.

## **SUBDIVISIONS / ZONING**

### **OLD BUSINESS**

1. **Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan.** S. Disidore indicated they had a short meeting last Thursday, there wasn't a great attendance. B. Bradley did not give a definitive response from Plainfield Township regarding singling out the township for a recycle – waste facility. J. Smethers will send out to all the future use plan. There will not be a vote on the plan until January. The 45-day comment period is until Friday August 11<sup>th</sup>. Then steering committee has to approve the draft plan and each individual township Planning Commission need to give their recommendation and forwarded to the LVPC. Once the review period is done, then it will be closer to voting on the final version. Next meeting is in September before the BOS meeting September 11<sup>th</sup>. We will need to have a Workshop meeting in August to approve or not.
2. **Financing for Backhoe –** J. Smethers indicated we approved this purchase in April and Embassy Bank starting working on the paperwork for financing. The township will put down a \$30,000 deposit with an interest rate of 6.95% for 5 years and payment would be \$1,625.00 per month. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by J. Mauser to authorize Jen Smethers to execute the loan documents to finance the backhoe. Vote: 5-0.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **1. Storm Damage Discussion**

- a. **Update on where we stand with FEMA/PEMA –** J. Smethers indicated FEMA & PEMA have been out assessing the storm damage; there is no guarantee we will receive relief for homeowners or the township. J. Coyle went out with PEMA and FEMA to assess the Township's damage and J. Smethers went out with them for individual property owners. They are coming back tomorrow to look at 60 more homes. Jen indicated there were 199 homeowners on the list submitted. There could be assistance for septic and well damage. The county still has the survey up to report damage.
- b. **Permit Fees –** J. Smethers indicated DEP could issue emergency permits to allow property owners to work along the waterways; unauthorized work without a permit could cause a loss of NFIP insurance.

J. Mauser indicated that debris may be removed from a waterway without a permit if the equipment does not go into the stream bed. For example if the equipment can reach the debris from the bank or if cables can be attached to debris and pulled to the bank, a permit is not necessary. In the past DEP has issued emergency permits which enable equipment to go into the stream bed as long as the DEP is notified and a plan is described. T. Noll is assessing damage to septic & wells that were covered by water. We should have him do a check off list so we can keep track of information. Jen will try and get water test kits from FEMA / PEMA, the samples need to be dropped off at DEP in Bethlehem. A. Disante should also go out and talk to residents regarding permits. Jen asked the Board if we can waive our admin. fee, either way we pay the admin. fee for his office hours. We can have Anthony do a check off list also. **MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by S. Newman to waive the admin. fees for permits to residents that had storm damage. Vote: 5-0. The Board discussed the dumpsters being pulled from certain locations. We will ask Waste Management to put one small dumpster at Garr Rd. if the pipe isn't fixed, another one be placed at 6754 Little Creek Rd. and one at the Township garage.

- c. **EWP Program** – J. Smethers indicated this is a grant program for stream bank erosion repairs for homeowners. The only problem is only 75% of grant is covered under EWP, 25% is not, but maybe DEP can pay the 25% and we can be the administrator. J. Mauser noted he has experience with this program and the township can also apply for grants through DEP. We should try and get involved with the program and Growing Greener. The Board suggested we go with this program conditionally if we get DEP funding. S. Newman suggested we also check with the County and see if they can assist with funding. J. Smethers noted everyone on the State level is trying to help us, and we need help at the Federal level.
2. **Hillendale Gate / Road Discussion** – M. DeBerardinis noted they made a temporary road around the ballfield. Charlie Nansteel fixed the sinkholes and we suspect there will be other sinkholes. We would like to take the temporary road and put in decent road bollards for emergency's and pipe placed at the end. Dr. Bill Vogt commented the road comes into Hillendale at the right corner, that short stretch should be surveyed to see where township still owns. Second Terrace comes to the gate and has always been an emergency right-of-way. Bill Vogt has some records he can bring to the Township office regarding ownership of Hillendale roads. The township will check archives for any records we might have. M. DeBerardinis and S. Newman then can sit down with Dr. Vogt and go over the information.
3. **UMBT Softball annual request to use Riverton field** – Emily Kline, UMBT Girls Softball coach is requesting use of the Riverton field from August to October for fall softball and waive the fees. They have LMBT residents in the program and we have an intermunicipal agreement with UMBT. They have submitted all the required paperwork and we annually grant their request to use the field and waive the fees. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by J. Mauser to grant the request. Vote: 5-0.

**Engineer report on Storm damage** – J. Coyle & F. Heitzman met with FEMA last week assessing the public property area and construction cost estimates of the damage. Justin provided pictures showing damage to some of the roads.

- Upper Mud Run Road – Steep embankment and complete mudslide down over to stream. Cost estimate is over a million dollars in damages.
  - Little Creek Road – Most of the damage is on private property and devastation to the County Bridges. The Township is working with the County Bridge Commission. Cost estimate is around \$500,000.
  - Upper Little Creek Road – This road was already damaged and sustained additional damage. Debris needs to be removed from the stream and the entire embankment reinforced with rip rap.
  - Garr Road – Pipe collapsed; Township will try to remediate.
  - Hahn Rd. – Road is completely gone and needs complete restoration. The cost estimate is about 1.3 million dollars.
  - Klausz Rd. – The embankment and road needs to be reconstructed. The cost estimate is around 1.1 million dollars.
  - Capp Road – Bridge crossing collapsed. Cost estimate is about 1 million dollars.
  - Old Franklin Hill Road – Landslides. The cost estimate is about \$500,000.
- Total in public damage is approximately 6.2 million dollars, that includes Upper Little Creek Road, Little Creek Rd. Klausz Road, Garr Rd. Upper Mud Run Road, Berry Hollo Rd. and Old Franklin Hill Rd. This does not include \$175,000 additional Township costs. We need to hit 23 million statewide in damages to be eligible for FEMA. Justin indicated FEMA Region 3 – National Flood Insurance is requesting a meeting with him and J. Smethers. There needs to be environmental reviews and it's going to take a lot of time. The best interest of the Township would be to get the roads operable and then hope to get reimbursement from FEMA.

**CORRESPONDENCE** - All Correspondence is located in the Township office.

**APPROVAL OF THE BILLS MOTION** by S. Newman second by S. Burns to pay the bills in the amount of \$118,616.22. Vote: 5-0.

## **REPORTS**

### **Board Members Reports**

**J. Mauser** – John did a presentation showing all the creeks and how high the levels rose. Nate from the County Conservation District is involved and can look at growing greener grants for water shed improvement. John mentioned the flow off 3 church hill with the channel being 2 ft. deep, there are ongoing issues on 611 and issues with infrastructure. There is a watershed on Howell Rd. with a very small pipe all the way to 611 that caused damage to the Riverside Grill Parking lot and property on Howell road that has two ponds John, A. Disante and Nate Pritchard are walking the property with the two ponds tomorrow. John will refer the resident to different agencies that can help.

**S. Disidore** – Susan thanked the Fire Company for the amazing job they did during the storm disaster.

**S. Newman** – Sandra would like to look into new vinyl decals for the trucks. The board had no objection.

**S. Burns** – Samantha indicated LTAP is doing their annual road study on Front Street at the bottom of Black Hill up further by Abbruzzi to 611 at the bottom of Little Creek to see how many vehicles are going over the bridge. Samantha mentioned a tractor trailer from Schneider trucking drove across her front yard and she filed a report with the trucking company. Anthony Salamone contact her to do an article for the Express Times regarding the truck issues.

**Township Manager Report** – J. Smethers indicated the RFP was advertised for the tennis / pickle board courts. Playground equipment is also ordered.

**Road Department Report** – F. Heitzman reported they have been very busy repairing roads damaged from the flood, shoulder damage repairs, pipe is ordered for Garr Rd. and hopefully they can put that in next week. The gutter was washed out at the Welcome Center and the power was out, they locked the bathrooms until the power is back on.

S. Disidore asked about the LCR paving project. J. Smethers indicated she is waiting to hear back from H & K on how we're going to move forward to finish the paving project. H & K is putting together a bill for what they have paved already, we will pay that out of Liquid Fuels fund.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Resident 8448 Upper Little Creek Rd.** – Resident indicated their personal bridge was washed out and insurance won't cover the costs to replace. J. Smethers mentioned VOAD volunteers or Mennonites might be able to help with building replacement bridges for those residents that have lost personal bridges. 8448 ULCR Resident also mentioned the culvert on ULCR is too small and the watershed surface water needs to be re-directed and the new bridge span needs to be wider.

**ADJOURNMENT** – The Public Meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted – Melissa Mastrogiovanni, Township Secretary / Planning Administrator  
Lower Mount Bethel Township