

Approved

**LOWER MOUNT BETHEL TOWNSHIP  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MINUTES – May 5, 2025 @ 7:00 P.M.**

**CALL TO ORDER** - The May 5, 2025, meeting of the Lower Mount Bethel Township Board of Supervisors was held at 6984 S. Delaware Drive, Martins Creek, Pennsylvania. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson DeBerardinis at 7:00 p.m. Also in attendance were, S. Disidore, C. Cook, D. Ascani, J. Mauser, K. Sebia, Solicitor, J. Smethers, and M. Mastrogiovanni. There were approximately 30 members of the audience present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. M. DeBerardinis announced there was an Executive Session held on 4/25/25, 5/1/25, and 5/5/25. No action was taken.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 7, 2025** – Correction made to the spelling of Briglia on pg. 1 and pg. 5. **MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by D. Ascani to approve the minutes as corrected. Vote: 5-0.

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

1. **LMB Sandt's Fire Company – Truck Maintenance.** G. Russo explained maintenance is needed on Engine 2611, 2612, and Tanker 2631 for a total cost of \$4,848.40. Other maintenance is needed this year, but not included are QRS utility 2633, Yearly inspection on all apparatus and any required repairs after maintenance and inspections are performed. George mentioned they have \$10,000 set aside for maintenance. The Fire Company will keep all records updated and be reimbursed upon submission of receipts. **MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by D. Ascani to approve the truck maintenance payments with the condition the Fire Company submits the bills and keeps all updated services records and provide those records to the township. Vote: 5-0.

G. Russo mentioned they would like to apply for the Hotel Tax Grant again for 2026, due by July 11<sup>th</sup>; and the Public Safety Grant which opens up on July 21<sup>st</sup>.

2. **Tree Planting Project Sign – R. Budihas** Trout Unlimited has been working on the design of a sign for the tree planting project. The sign will recognize partners from last year and this year's project. **MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by C. Cook to approve the sign with the condition that the LMBT Fire Company and Township logo be added to the signs which will be placed around the trees that are planted. Vote: 5-0.

**SUBDIVISIONS / ZONING – None**

**OLD BUSINESS**

1. **Consideration and Possible Adoption of Ordinance 2025-02 Repeal of the Street Lighting District Ordinances** - The Ordinance was properly advertised in the Express Times on 4/21/25. The Ordinance was properly advertised in the Express Times on 4/21/25. **MOTION** was made by D. Ascani, second by J. Mauser to adopt Ordinance 2025-02 repeal of the Street Light District. This would be effective for the 2025 billing. S. Disidore noted her opposition as stated before. J. Mauser noted we are one of less than a handful in the State that imposed a street light assessment for frontage. John mentioned the unfairness for a person that's retired to pay \$50 - \$200 per year for streetlights without raising taxes, and no more administration time spent on billing, he supports this. M. DeBerardinis opened the floor for Public Comment.

- **Mark Koch** - Mr. Koch noted his opposition to the street light assessment, it's across the road and unconstitutional being he is charged for the rest of frontage.
- **Marge Holmes** - Ms. Holmes has been a resident for 44 years, the streetlights went into effect in the 1980's; the street light assessment should not be abolished. Ms. Holmes noted the unfairness to all residents paying for something they don't use and paying \$17,000 out of the General Fund that can be used for something else.
- **Terry Dicker** - Ms. Dicker gave the history of the street light assessment and increased costs through the years and noted her opposition to the street light assessment and unfairness since she doesn't get use of the light being across the street.
- **Jefferey Matthews** - Mr. Matthews commented it's a weak justification, what other towns are doing is not important. J. Mauser noted we need to be considerate of our neighbors and give when we can. John made a \$100,000 generous donation to help our community and EMS. Only 15% of our population pays the street light tax.
- **Ashley Rasley** - 6211 Front Street. Ms. Rasley commented she pays for 330 ft of frontage and pays \$180.00 for her street light assessment.
- **Robin Kessler** - 6885 S. Delaware Dr. Mr. Kessler indicated he pays for a long strip of frontage; his bill is \$213.80. Mr. Kessler noted it's an unfair tax for only some of the resident's
- **John Koshinski** - Mr. Koshinski noted his opposition to repealing the street light assessment. The existing lights should remain on. John asked what if other people ask for a streetlight now near their house. D. Ascani indicated it's up to the Roadmaster if more lights should be installed for safety issues. J. Mauser mentioned safety is top priority especially at intersections. If more lights are needed, the Board of Supervisors would decide.
- **Mark Mamrak** - Mr. Mamrak commented repealing the street light assessment would be unfair and funding this to pay for the street light tax, money that can be used from something else. This could open up a can of worms. D. Ascani explained there are a lot of other services such as leaf collection and road maintenance that not all residents get. J. Mauser mentioned Federal and State Money is harder to get, we can do a study to evaluate if additional lights are needed for safety. A lot of time has been spent on this issue.
- **Catherine Buehler** – Ms. Buehler suggested residents in the street light district get together and figure out a different solution. S. Disidore explained the street light assessment is authorized by the Second-Class Township Code. Ms. Buehler mentioned it was always done by road frontage, this is good and bad; but eventually the township will have to raise taxes. J. Mauser would like to see us spend more time looking for grants, new ideas for us to work together to exceed in a rural community and grow and increase tax revenue. There was discussion if the streetlights should be turned off. Driving through Martins Creek to Forks is dark and rural area and population very dense, for safety purposed, that would not be a good solution. Solicitor K. Sebia reviewed the letter from J. Zator that addresses conflict of interest / ethics questions relating to Supervisors voting that live in the street light district.

M. DeBerardinis called for a vote on the motion to adopt Ordinance 2025-02 – Repeal of the Street Light District. S. Disidore - no, C. Cook - yes, J. Mauser - yes, D. Ascani - abstained, M. DeBerardinis - abstained. Solicitor K. Sebia clarified that 2 abstentions counts as passing. Motion passed.

2. **Resolution 2025-08 Amending the Fire Apparatus and Vehicle Use Agreements with LMB/Sandt's Eddy Volunteer Fire Company. MOTION** by D. Ascani, second by J. Mauser amending the Fire Apparatus and Vehicle Use Agreement with LMB/Sandt's Eddy Volunteer Fire Company adding the brush truck to the agreement. Vote: 5-0.
3. **Discussion on Gravel Hill Solar Camera or Hard-Wired Camera.** C. Cook tried to get in touch with Page at Met Ed, but she is out of the office until further notice. Our new contact is going to be Danielle Wilson, and she couldn't find the job number. We need to pub a new job order in for the pole replacement. C. Cook mentioned solar would not be a good option, we should go with hard wired. Public Comment by C. Buehler - Gravel Hill Enterprises are trucking out soil on a regular basis. Public Comment by J. Keifer – we might want to ask to put cameras on the Angle/ Stine Property. J. Smethers indicated they will not allow us to do that.
4. **Approval of the MC OPCO LLC v. Northampton County Revenue Appeals Board, et al Settlement Agreement** – J. Zator received the information he needed from Ms. Azzalina, he has no objection to the BOS voting to approve. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by J. Mauser to approve the settlement agreement between the MC OPCO LLC v Northampton County Revenue Appeals Board, et al. for Parcel Id. G11-7-15-0117 5241 Martins Creek Belvidere Hwy. Vote: 5-0.
5. **Consideration of Purchase and Financing for Snowplow and Chassis** – M. DeBerardinis reviewed the inspection report with the Board of Supervisors from Frick Trucking for the 1998 Mack Dump Truck. There are issues with rust and to take it apart, they might not be able to put it back together. We will keep it as a spare and use for projects that are close by. J. Smethers indicated we received an estimate from International for the snowplow in the amount of \$127,223.26 and from E.M. Kutz in the amount of \$78,809.00 for the Chassis. Both are co-star pricing. There are also two estimates for financing, Community Leasing Partners and Fidelity Bank with Community Leasing Partners being the lowest. The estimate was completed with a \$35,000 downpayment, either for 5 years or 7 years. There are no payments due for 1 year. We can take the \$35,000.00 out of the Capital Reserve account, the loan can be paid off any time. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by J. Mauser to approve purchase of the Snowplow and Chassis with International and upfitting of Chassis from E.M. Kutz with financing through Community Leasing Partners for Option 2 – 7-year term with a \$35,000.00 downpayment to be taken out of the Road Department Equipment Fund. Vote: 5-0.
6. **Appointment of Road Department Foreman** – This was properly posted according to the Union Contract. We received letters of interest from Mark Hess and Shannon Parson. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by J. Mauser to appoint Mark Hess as the Road Foreman effective upon F. Heitzman's retirement. Vote: 5-0.

7. **Approval of 2025 Road Paving Project** – Bids for Miller Road. We received 6 bids. The lowest bidder is H & K Group in the amount of **\$274,709.19**. We have **\$355,220.00** in the Liquid Fuels fund. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by J. Mauser to award the 2025 Road Paving Project to H & K Group in the amount of \$274,709.19. Vote: 5-0. M. DeBerardinis mentioned we got a good price to do all of Miller Rd. We can bank the remainder of liquid fuels for next year. D. Ascani mentioned if drainage is needed, we can use liquid fuels similar to when we did drainage on Fairview Avenue.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

1. **Approve Advertising for Road Department Equipment Operator / CDL. MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by S. Disidore to approve advertising for the Road Department Equipment Operator. Motion amended, second amended to include per union contract regulations. Vote: 5-0.
2. **Approve Advertising for Road Department – Seasonal Laborer. MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by C. Cook to approve advertising for Seasonal Laborer, non-CDL per the union contracts job description with no set time frame. Motion amended and second amended to set the hourly pay at \$20.00, the Road Foreman will set the hours as needed. Vote: 5-0.
3. **Approval of Increase in Township Treasurer Hours – MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by S. Disidore to increase the Township Treasurers hours up to 20 hours per week. Vote: 5-0.
4. **Authorization to Open CD(s) at Fidelity Bank for Open Space Funds** - J. Smethers shared the rates and maturity dates from Fidelity Bank and different options for staggering the CD's. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by S. Disidore to open (2) two CD's in the amount of \$300,000.00 each for 3 months; and (2) two CD's in the amount of \$500,000.00 each for 6 months. Total \$1.6 million. Vote: 5-0. J. Smethers noted \$42,000.00 will be left in the Open Space Account. The new Township Manager can explore options as each CD term is up. J. Smethers will get the paperwork completed with Fidelity Bank.
5. **Sanitation Assessment Waiver Request – 6654 Main Street – Doughan house fire.** The Doughan's are requesting to have the sanitation assessment waived for 2025. **MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by D. Ascani to deny the sanitation waiver request. Vote: 5-0.
6. **Authorization for Zator Law/King Spry to Investigate Definition of Open Space Benefit Under Open Space Lands Act** – J. Smethers explained this is in relation to Bob Vishnesky's property. In the meetings with PennDOT to rectify the flooding at his property, the discussion came up as to whether Open Space funds could be used to purchase his property, demolish it, and leave it as open space. Jen indicated she couldn't find information what is defined as an open space benefit. **MOTION** by J. Mauser, second by S. Disidore to have Zator Law investigate the definitions of Open Space Benefit under the Open Space Lands Act with a cap of up to 3 hours. Vote: 5-0.

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

**APPROVAL OF THE BILLS - MOTION** by M. DeBerardinis, second by D. Ascani to approve the bill list in the amount of \$172,414.38. M. Mastrogiovanni mentioned this number includes two months of Sanitation payments totaling \$80,418.00. Vote: 5-0.

## **REPORTS**

**Chairman's Report – No report.**

### **Board Members Reports**

**J. Mauser** – John presented a slide show of the Koshinski property, there are ongoing issues there and needs to be addressed. We might want to look into the Low Volume Dirt and Gravel Road grants. M. DeBerardinis is not in favor of Gabion baskets. J. Mauser mentioned J. Koshinski property has issues from the big flood. John will set up a meeting with himself, J. Coyle and J. Koshinski.

**S. Disidore** – No report.

D. Ascani – Dave would like to review the ordinance and permitting requirements for short-term rentals (Air b&b). This will be on the June 2<sup>nd</sup> agenda for discussion.

C. Cook – Chris reported a resident contacted him regarding sealing cracked roads. We might wasn't to look at some of the road and patch. The shed at Riverton needs a roof and electricity.

**Township Treasurer Report** - J. Smethers reported she submitted the Jon Russo grant, she is working on the FEMA site evaluations for 5821 and 5841 Del Haven Rd., submitted the ARPA report that was due on 4/30/25, working on the pension funds rollover. The grow NORCO grant is due 5/30/25, she is seeing if were eligible for any Capital Improvements projects. Jen recommended some improvements at Centerfield to the facets, wall outside lights and repaving the parking lot. We might want to investigate making Centerfield a historical property in which you can explore more grant opportunities. Jen is also going to submit the hotel grant for the Fire Company and the Recreation Board.

**Township Solicitor Report – Written report submitted. No further comments.**

**Road Department Report** - F. Heitzman reported they replaced pipes on Miller Road, micro sealed the parking lot (we used equipment from Washington Township ) Washington Township used our crack sealer ordered tractor tires, ordered new bristles for broom, and the cinder shed is just about completed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – J. Mathews J. Smethers how much money is left in the Street Light Fund. J. Smethers indicated about 3 months, that money will be expended before using General Funds. J. Matthews asked about the status of hiring the new manager. M. DeBerardinis indicated the interviews are ongoing.

**ADJOURMENT** - The Board of Supervisors meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Mastrogiovanni, Township Secretary - Lower Mount Bethel Township