

HALFMOON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

JUNE 12TH, 2023
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1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair David Piper called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. (present at Community Center). Other Supervisors present were Rose Ann Hoover (present at Community Center); Patti Hartle (present by Zoom); Chuck Beck (present at Community Center) and Ron Servello (present at Community Center). Staff present were Amy Smith, Township Secretary (present at Community Center); Brett Laird, Township Treasurer and Chuck Beck, Public Works Lead (present at Community Center).

Residents & others in attendance (In-person): Karen Miller; Donnan Stoicovy; Gina Motter; Lenore Foster; Wayne Foster; Peggy Sue Majewski; Sharon Rovanseck; Susan Person; Cynthia Hahn, C-NET; Halie Kines, Centre Daily Times; Eric Norenberg, Centre Region COG Director, Michelle Schellberg and Steve Schellberg.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Rovanseck expressed her concern over potential lost services if the board did not fund Schlow Library and urged them to reconsider participating in the agreement.

Ms. Miller expressed concerns over lost services that have happened under the current board and encouraged funding of the Schlow Library.

3. EMERGENCY SERVICES DISCUSSIONS

a. *Mr. Laird stated at the May 11th BOS Meeting, the Board moved to approve the EMS Funding Formula in which HMT is responsible for 41% of the Municipal Contribution Line Item annually. The board directed staff to contact the UBEH COG, Ferguson Twp. & Warriors Mark Twp. for their consideration. To date, Warriors Mark Twp. responded they were not interested in being part of the formula, as they just signed a contract to permit AMED to have full primary coverage; Ferguson Twp.'s discussed the matter briefly at their May 15th meeting. Centrice stated she was going to collect data on what percentage that PM EMS has primary coverage and meet with the Chair regarding placing the formula on the agenda in the future. The UBEH-COG municipalities have not responded or corresponded to their thoughts. The question for discussion is, does HMT still feel the 41% formula is fair?*

Mr. Piper stated he is all right with the 41% funding formula and if the other UBEH COG municipalities step up, it can be looked at again.

Mr. Servello stated that 41% is a fair amount after a budget is discussed and approved and that other sources of income would be accounted for in the percentage.

Mr. Laird verified that it would be 41% of the budget line item.

Ms. Hoover stated she is glad the PMEMS has a board and agrees that other sources of income should be subtracted from the budgeted line item. Ms. Hoover added that 41% is fair.

Ms. Hartle stated that 41% is fair.

Mr. Beck agreed that 41% is fair.

b. *Mr. Laird stated to date, Halfmoon Township has \$56,090.19 in the Fire Protection Fund as well as a placeholder of \$25,000.00 from a December 8th vote to provide additional funding to PMFC & WMFC. The question for discussion is, when and how does HMT want to distribute the funding?*

Mr. Piper stated he would like to distribute the funding next month and include Alpha Fire Company. Mr. Piper suggested that Port Matilda Fire Company gets half and Warriors Mark Franklin Fire Company and Alpha Fire Company each get a quarter.

Mr. Servello stated he would like the distribution of these funds to go through the normal budget process. Mr. Servello commented that Port Matilda Fire Company needs to provide a budget and the board must agree to this budget. Mr. Servello commented that PMFC has sufficient funds right now so he would like to defer distribution of these funds until there is an approved budget. Mr. Servello agrees that some funding should be provided to Alpha Fire Company.

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Mr. Laird stated Mr. Witherite, PMFC and a Representative of WMFC will be present at the June 22nd meeting.

Ms. Hoover stated she would like to wait until the normal budget process and supports providing a donation to Alpha Fire Company.

Ms. Hartle stated there should be a regular funding formula. Ms. Hartle stated these funds should go toward capital but agreed that it should go through the budget process. Ms. Hartle agrees that there should be a donation provided to Alpha Fire Company.

Mr. Beck stated the funds should be divided up three ways between PMFC, WMFC and Alpha Fire Company.

Mr. Servello reminded the board that the municipalities make the loan payment for the fire truck.

Mr. Piper stated if there is no contract, it is important to show they can rely on funds and if we are not paying enough, then it needs to be discussed. Mr. Piper stated there is a difference between a contract with Schlow Library and contracts with emergency services.

Mr. Servello questioned whether any of the other Upper Bald Eagle Halfmoon COG members have a contract with the PMFC.

Mr. Laird stated that no other UBEH COG member has a contract with the PMFC.

Mr. Servello stated that there is no need for a contract and a contract is two sided, but necessary funding needs to be provided.

Ms. Hoover commented that since they will be in attendance at the next meeting that possibly a contract could be negotiated.

Ms. Hartle stated she would like to see a standard formula.

Mr. Beck agreed.

4. REGIONAL SERVICES DISCUSSIONS

- a. *Mr. Laird stated that in 2023, HMT is slated to spend \$102,995.00 in Centre Region COG services. The question for discussion is, is HMT content or happy with the amount of participation in Centre Region COG? Do you feel the funding is adequately meeting the services provided?***

Mr. Piper stated he is extremely pleased and satisfied with the planning services provided. Mr. Piper stated he is concerned about the money that is being spent on studies and consultants. Mr. Piper stated he would like to limit the increased amount for 2024 and cut administration costs back.

Mr. Servello stated he is okay with the level of participation but is concerned with spending plans. Mr. Servello stated that citizens pay for code services if used but it all comes out of the same pocket.

Ms. Hoover stated that the current services are fine and that the planning services provided by Mr. Boeckel are excellent. Ms. Hoover agreed that administrative costs are too much and wanted to remind the Centre Region COG that there is not an endless supply of money.

Ms. Hartle stated the services are exemplary and because we are part of the Centre Region Code Agency, we have access to the TRAISR software. Ms. Hartle added that the Centre Region COG will need to grow and is very well run. Ms. Hartle stated that there are lots of discussions surrounding consultants and it saves money. Ms. Hartle added the Centre Region municipalities get their monies worth.

Mr. Beck stated he had nothing to add.

Mr. Foster questioned what services Halfmoon Township does not participate in.

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Mr. Laird stated Halfmoon Township is not involved in the Parks and Recreation program and Fire.

5. RECREATIONAL SERVICES DISCUSSIONS

- a. Mr. Laird stated in 2023, HMT is slated to spend \$54,620.00 on library services (\$50,120- Schlow & \$4500- CC). This is the last year HMT is obligated to provide a contractual amount to Schlow Library. The question for discussion is, how does HMT want to provide funding to both libraries in 2024? As well as how much?**

Mr. Piper stated that he spoke with Bellefonte Borough who is the biggest contributor to the Centre County Library outside of the Centre Region and they pay \$5.00 per citizen. Mr. Piper commented that he is okay with paying \$5.00 per person and if Schlow Library wants the money they need to leave the footlockers at Way Fruit Farm. Mr. Piper stated that if not, then he recommends supporting the Centre County Library and Historical Museum and the bookmobile. Mr. Piper commented that the costs of operating Schlow Library are too high.

Mr. Servello stated that Schlow Library is a public library that receives multiple funding sources that includes State and Federal funding, and they should be careful about removing services. Mr. Servello added that Penn State Library is a huge resource and offers public services. Mr. Servello commented that he supports libraries and thinks the municipalities should contribute but there does not need to be a contract.

Ms. Hoover stated she did some research and Schlow Library is the only library that is part of a COG. Ms. Hoover commented that the contract was one sided. Ms. Hoover stated she has a lot of questions. Ms. Hoover stated the Altoona Library and is a large library that has a \$700,000 budget compared to Schlow Libraries' 3-million-dollar budget. Ms. Hoover commented that citizens did not have book lockers two years ago and the Patton Township drop box should stay at its location.

Ms. Hartle stated that the contract is not one way and is reasonable. Ms. Hartle stated that without being in the Joint Articles of Agreement with Schlow Library the citizens of Halfmoon Township would lose the foot lockers, the book return would be removed from Brothers Pizza, the book return at the Uni-Mart in Patton Township would be moved, we would no longer be able to use the zoom through Schlow Library, the material distribution to Centre County Library will be reduced, programs will be reduced, they would have to return to collecting fines, raise catalogue costs and it will have an impact on the Centre Region municipalities and municipalities outside the Centre Region. Ms. Hartle stated she would be willing to consider a per person amount but would prefer it to be \$10.00 per person.

Mr. Beck stated he likes the idea of a per person amount and that Schlow Library is overrated. Mr. Beck commented that there are other libraries out there.

The board requested that Mr. Laird bring back some formulas for consideration.

Ms. Schellberg stated she requested a list of materials that were purchased over the last three years and has not received this information.

There was discussion on whether a survey was going to be sent out to the citizens. Mr. Servello stated that a past survey did not favor participating in funding Schlow Library. Mr. Servello commented that he was elected to make decisions and a survey does not determine those decisions.

- b. Mr. Laird stated in 2023, HMT is slated to spend \$16,683.25 in CNET services. The township is also slated to receive \$36,432.58 in Cable Franchise Fees. To clear up a misconception. The franchise fees which Comcast pays are entirely unrelated to your C-NET membership dues. The franchise fees are simply 5% of Comcast's gross revenue in Halfmoon Township. So, you would continue to receive your Comcast franchise fees whether or not you are a C-NET member municipality. The question for discussion is, is HMT content or happy with the amount of participation with CNET? Do you feel the funding is adequately meeting the services provided?**

Mr. Piper stated it is expensive, but he knows the public likes it and it meets recording requirements, so he is okay with the service.

Mr. Servello stated he is okay with the service.

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Ms. Hoover stated it is an incredible service that can be managed but there are no requirements that a meeting must be recorded. Ms. Hoover added she was okay with the service.

Ms. Hartle stated that this is an outstanding service for the board and public.

Mr. Beck stated he is okay with the service.

6. POLICIES & PROCEDURES DISCUSSIONS

- a. *Mr. Laird stated that to date, the staff is currently working on all Zoning/SALDO Ordinances; employee job descriptions; etc. The question for discussion, are there specific policies and procedures you feel are being neglected or need revised?***

Mr. Piper stated he would like the sprinkler requirement removed from SALDO, home occupation revisions, restrictions for solar farms and a complete review of Zoning and SALDO.

Mr. Servello stated the staff is currently working on SALDO and Zoning revisions. Mr. Servello added that the staff has been working hard to improve policies and procedures and encourages them to continue. Mr. Servello stated the Public Nuisance Ordinance needs to be revised.

Ms. Hoover stated she appreciates staff looking at documents and making revisions where necessary and that staff are doing a good job.

Ms. Hartle stated she would like to see the Planning Commission continue to review the ordinances and would like to see some protections against solar farms. Ms. Hartle stated she would also like to see rental housing codes considered and controlled development.

Mr. Beck stated staff are doing a good job and agrees the sprinkler requirement needs to be removed from SALDO.

7. FUTURE PLANNING & BUDGETING DISCUSSIONS

- a. *Mr. Laird stated that to date, the staff has created a fleet maintenance plan, and is beginning to develop building and park plans on the financial side. The question for discussion, are there any futuristic plans you'd like to see within the next year or two?***

Mr. Piper stated he would like to see a road plan.

Mr. Servello stated that all plans are subject to change but there needs to be a plan for facilities and roads.

Ms. Hoover stated she does not see where there is a need for more parks, and we should maintain the parks we have.

Ms. Hartle stated there should be a park plan to put funds aside to make improvements to Municipal Lane Park that complements Autumn Meadow Park. Ms. Hartle stated she would like to see bike paths or frisbee golf or something that keeps people outside. Ms. Hartle commented that grants can be obtained to help with park improvements, walking paths, easements, or for fixing the shoulder on Smith Road.

Mr. Beck stated he would like to see the upkeep of parks equipment, road projects and building maintenance.

- b. *Mr. Laird stated that currently, HMT has a Facebook page, a website, a kiosk, and an email address listserv. The question for discussion is, do you feel given the current steps that are being taken are sufficient in manner?***

Mr. Piper stated that there is more than enough being done.

Mr. Servello stated there is a lot of interaction with the public.

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Ms. Hoover stated there are a lot of questions being asked on social media and staff are available and can answer questions too.

Ms. Hartle questioned whether staff thought a newsletter would be helpful. Staff stated that most of the time once the newsletter gets out it has become old news or that some of the information has changed.

Mr. Beck stated he is fine with the current avenues being used and they are sufficient.

- c. ***Mr. Laird stated that in 2023, HMT ran a 1.2-million-dollar operating budget. This was after cutting the total millage from 8.37 mills to 7.37 mills. The question for discussion, does HMT feel the current 1.2-million-dollar budget is sufficient, or do they feel it needs to be altered by either increasing or decreasing taxes?***

Mr. Piper stated he would like to cut taxes back to 6 mills.

Mr. Servello stated his okay with the level of funding.

Ms. Hoover agreed that she is okay with the current level of funding.

Ms. Hartle stated in 2021 the taxes were increased for the first time in ten plus years and were cut 1 mil last year. Ms. Hartle added that the current budget was stable and in a good place right now and the taxes should not be lowered.

Supervisor Beck stated that the budget was in good shape now and if a reduction can be made in the upcoming budget year that would be great but if not, he did not want to decrease taxes only to have to turn around and increase them the following year.

- d. ***Mr. Laird stated that to date, HMT has \$303,632.31 in ARPA Funds. The township has until December 24, 2024, to obligate the funds and until December 31, 2026, to spend the ARPA Funds. The township has already utilized the Standard Allowance allowed to local government. The question for discussion, what project(s) would HMT like to spend our funding on?***

Mr. Piper stated that he would like to see ARPA funding utilized to make improvements to Smith Road, with the improvements including widening and culvert replacement, but he understands that would be a substantial project.

Mr. Servello added he agreed with Mr. Piper's idea and stated he felt ARPA funds are best used as one-time money, that produces a good return. Mr. Servello added that funding of EMS & Fire should be accomplished through the General Fund budget and not one-time money.

Ms. Hoover agreed that road projects made the most sense.

Ms. Hartle stated she liked the idea of the Smith Road project, and perhaps if funds were leftover, they could be used for outdoor park improvements or solar panels on municipal owned buildings.

Supervisor Beck responded he felt the Smith Road project if completed correctly would cost more than was available in the ARPA funds, although he felt Smith Road needed attention.

Lead Beck stated he had met with Matt Kenepp, the township PENNDOT representative, about a potential project on Smith Road from the Tow Hill Road intersection to the Marengo Road intersection. Lead Beck added Mr. Kenepp stated the project would cost north of \$550,000.00 and that did not include acquiring drainage rights-of-way. Lead Beck stated he felt an in-house solution may be obtainable but recognized the fact that a solution may not meet everyone's expectations.

Ms. Hartle questioned if the shoulders could be widened?

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Lead Beck stated in certain sections it could potentially be completed but extensive research was not completed due to having to involve township engineers and the cost of their time.

8. OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION DISCUSSIONS

- a. *Mr. Laird stated that at the 08/25/2022 BOS meeting, the BOS voted to commit up to \$224,000.00 to the Centre County Agricultural Land Preservation Board for the permanent easement purchase of 112.07 prime ag farmland acres for the Joanne Fisher property. The County corresponded with the township staff questioning if upon the completion of the appraisal resulted in less than \$224,000.00 would the township be interested in contributing to the Tom Hall property, who is currently #1 on their list. The question for discussion, does HMT want to contribute funding toward the purchase?***

Mr. Piper stated that he would be open to discussion about assisting in funding the Tom Hall property but needed more information prior to deciding.

Mr. Servello commented that he was not in favor of providing funding and felt the program growth as a whole needed reviewed.

Ms. Hoover agreed with Mr. Servello.

Ms. Hartle stated at this time that she was not interested but it is something the Open Space Preservation Board should review about potential partnerships.

Mr. Beck stated he was not interested and felt the County ranked the property number one and should fund the project.

- b. *Mr. Laird stated that currently, HMT has 2080.8437 acres in its 99-Year Lease Program. Twice in its history HMT has partnered with Centre County to permanently preserve the development rights of parcels within the township. As of 2023, the current price per acre is \$40.74/Acre. The township also has plans of attempting to permanently preserve other parcels in the future. The question for discussion is, how would the current HMT board like to continue the open space program (permanent, annual leases, combination, etc.)?***

Mr. Piper commented that he would like to continue permanently purchasing properties while allowing for the potential of new leases to be obtained. Mr. Piper added that he felt the benefits outweighed the costs, in the fact the program slowed down development.

Mr. Servello stated he was concerned about the long-term growth of the program. Mr. Servello added he felt there are properties in the program that should not have been in the program to begin with. Mr. Servello continued he understands the program exists and the township must make do with what currently stands and re-evaluate the program and adjust when necessary. Mr. Servello stated an example of a potential change was the fact the CPI adjustments can only increase and not decrease with the economy.

Ms. Hoover commented that she would like to see stricter criteria for new applications but supports the program as a whole, allowing Halfmoon to remain rural and green.

Ms. Hartle stated the township does have stricter criteria for new applications as well as a new scoring system for rating properties. Ms. Hartle added the Open Space Preservation Board has been seeking various partnerships to obtain permanent purchases. Ms. Hartle commented that the benefit to the 99-year lease program is the fact it secures the land until a potential permanent purchase can be made.

Mr. Beck added he felt permanent purchases were the best option moving forward.

Mr. Servello commented he also would like to see the potential of a benefit for the citizens from the open space land. Mr. Servello added the only open space land that can be utilized by the citizens is the state game lands.

Mr. Laird turned the meeting over to Mr. Piper.

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9. AMENDMENT TO THE AGENDA

Mr. Piper stated that it had come to the attention of the board during the course of the meeting that a change was needed to the agenda as written, due to a necessary time sensitive vote that was required. Mr. Piper added the change was in response to an incident that had occurred at Municipal Lane Park that required the hiring of an environmental consulting firm.

- **MOTION:** *Mr. Servello moved to add the proposal provided by JHA Companies for Municipal Lane Clean-up to the agenda; Ms. Hartle seconded; Vote 5-0-0; Motion Carried.*

10. APPROVAL OF JHA COMPANIES PROPOSAL FOR MUNICIPAL LANE PARK CLEAN-UP

Mr. Piper stated that an incident occurred at the Municipal Lane Park where a third-party vendor had allowed tennis court resurfacing material to become in contact with a seasonal waterway. Mr. Piper added the incident had been reported to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) by Halfmoon Township staff and DEP determined as the landowner, the township should ensure the situation was handled properly. Mr. Piper continued that in the best effort of due diligence, the township needed to hire an environmental consultant firm, which staff had obtained a quote for in the amount of \$12,500.00 from JHA Companies to oversee the project and work alongside the Public Works Department.

- **MOTION:** *Mr. Servello moved to approve the proposal of JHA Companies in the amount to not exceed \$12,500.00 to provide environmental consultant services; Mr. Beck seconded; Vote 5-0-0; Motion Carried.*

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION REGARDING PERSONNEL

Mr. Piper announced that the board would now adjourn to an Executive Session to discuss personnel. Mr. Piper reconvened the meeting announcing that no decisions had been made or will be made at this time.

12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the board, the regular meeting was adjourned at 10:06 a.m.

- **MOTION:** *Mr. Servello moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:06 a.m.; Mr. Beck seconded; Vote 5-0-0; Motion Carried.*

Respectfully submitted,



Amy M. Smith,
Township Secretary

