

Minutes of Meeting
Board of Commissioners
Springfield Township

The Board of Commissioners of Springfield Township met in regular monthly meeting on Wednesday evening, November 9, 2022, at 7:30 PM at the Springfield Township Building for the purpose of transacting the general business of the Township. The meeting was also offered in a live streaming feature. Mr. Lee announced that the video would be made available on the Township's website beginning Thursday, November 10, 2022. All members of the Board were present. Mr. Lee presided.

Mr. Lee asked everyone to join the Board of Commissioners in a moment of silent reflection honoring the service men and women who have placed themselves in harm's way in order to help preserve our safety at home and abroad.

Mr. Lee led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion (Wilson-Ratsavong) carried unanimously, dispensing with the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting and approving same as written and recorded in the official minute book of the Township.

Mr. Lee announced that the Board of Commissioners conducted an executive session as part of their November 7, 2022 workshop meeting to discuss three personnel matters and one real estate matter.

Mr. Lee invited Robert "Bob" Gutowski to the front of the room and asked Commissioner Standish to read into the record Resolution No. 1584, a resolution honoring Robert "Bob" Gutowski for 24 years of service as a member of the Springfield Township Planning Commission.

Motion (Standish-Maxwell) carried unanimously to adopt Resolution No. 1584.

Mr. Gutowski thanked the Board and stated it was an honor to serve on the Planning Commission. Mr. Gutowski expressed his gratitude to the Board for the opportunity to be a part of the local democratic process in Springfield Township.

Mr. Lee opened the meeting to public comment.

Erin McCrosson, Wyndmoor, addressed the Board and expressed her dissatisfaction that the continued use of the PBA logo is causing division in the township. Ms. McCrosson read into the record a letter she previously sent to the Board, the Police Chief and the Township Manager regarding the results of a survey circulated last spring regarding police-community relations. Ms. McCrosson urged to Board to consider the recommendations included in the letter.

Claire Janowicz, Oreland, addressed the Board regarding the PBA logo. Ms. Janowicz agreed with the comments and recommendations in Ms. McCrosson's letter. Ms. Janowicz engaged in conversation with various commissioners and the solicitor as to the status of the PBA logo and the Board's efforts to date to require the PBA to change their logo.

Mr. Garrity wished to make it clear that it is not the goal of the PBA to have a racially offensive symbol. Instead, the PBA is taking the position that the symbol is not racially offensive.

Mr. Cobb expressed his desire to have an open dialog with the PBA.

Erin McCrosson readdressed the Board and suggested that perhaps a professional mediator could be hired to facilitate an open dialog. She also made a suggestion that the Board consider creating an advisory group to help with the efforts to resolve the issue.

Betsy Wallace, Wyndmoor, stated she sent a letter to all the commissioners in April 2022 regarding the PBA logo issue. Ms. Wallace opined that race relations is a difficult topic, and echoed Ms. McCrosson's suggestion to hire an outside professional to facilitate conversation between the Board, the PBA and township residents.

Mr. Graham noted that an open forum was held in October to address the logo utilized by the PBA. The Chief of Police and the PBA members were formally invited to participate but refused to attend.

Mr. Lee disagreed with the term "refused". He opined that there was very short notice given to the PBA and Police Chief, and perhaps if more notice was provided they may have participated. Mr. Graham suggested they were given over 30 days' notice. Mr. Lee disagreed and again suggested that only 10 days' notice was provided.

Ellen Stevenson, Flourtown, echoed Erin McCrosson's recommendation to hire a professional facilitator.

Caroline Shuman, Flourtown, informed the Board that earlier in the evening the Police Department was called to her residence in response to threats made by her neighbor to her and her children. Ms. Shuman noted that it is not the first time the police were called to her home. She expressed her displeasure with the manner in which the police treated her and her complaints against her neighbor, and insinuated that special consideration was being provided to her neighbor because of his relationship with one of the members of the Board. Mr. Wilson noted that the neighbor Ms. Shuman is referring to is his son. He suggested that his son and Ms. Shuman have a bad relationship, mainly due to the fact that they must share a common driveway. Mr. Garrity informed the Board that it is inappropriate to discuss an open police investigation in public. Ms. Shuman disagreed. Mr. Lee acknowledged Ms. Shuman's concerns, and suggested that if she is not happy with the way the Police Department handled the situation, there are other avenues to pursue. Ms. Shuman suggested she hired an attorney and has contacted the Montgomery County District Attorney's office for assistance.

Tamita Jordan, Wyndmoor, stated that the issue surrounding the PBA logo is a difficult one. She believes it would be most helpful for residents to understand the relationship between the Board of Commissioners, the PBA and the Police Department. It would also be helpful to hear from the people who are affected the most by the logo. She commented that courageous conversations are difficult, but necessary. She expressed her feeling that the flag is disturbing.

Ms. Ratsavong commented that she understands the confusion surrounding the relationship between the Board, the PBA and the Police Department. Ms. Ratsavong read into the record a prepared statement addressing comments received by the Board at last month's meeting when a group of people randomly came to speak in support of the PBA logo, but the meeting turned into personal attacks against Mr. Graham. Ms. Ratsavong opined that efforts by an elected official to improve the community for everyone is an important and noble effort for which no one should be attacked. Ms. Ratsavong acknowledged that while some members of the community may view the flag utilized by the PBA positively, those individuals fail to acknowledge that the flag is painful for others. Ms. Ratsavong stated that the Board continues to push for open dialog on the issue.

Mr. Lee noted that other police departments have used the symbol in the past, but have found it appropriate to remove it. Mr. Lee acknowledged the PBA is a private organization, but the organization is made up entirely of Springfield police officers. Mr. Lee concluded that he is not prepared to terminate discussion on this matter.

Erin McCrosson expressed her appreciation for the leadership of the Board on the issue of the PBA logo and suggested that it is important for the police department and community to have productive conversation on the matter.

Mr. Lee, Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, had no report.

Mr. Standish, Chairman of the Community Development Committee, had no report.

Mr. Wilson, Chairman of Environmental Resources Committee, reported:

Mr. Wilson announced that during the month of October 2022, Springfield Township residents recycled 156.5 tons of materials with a householder participation rate of 75.9%. The net cost for the month was \$28,351.48.

Mr. Graham, Chairman of the Cultural Resources Committee, had no report.

Mr. Maxwell, Chairman of Public Works and Facilities Committee, reported:

Motion (Maxwell-Ratsavong) carried unanimously to appoint Lee Kowalski of Wyndmoor, and Jared Schwartz of Erdenheim, as alternate members of the Springfield Township Shade Tree Commission. Mr. Maxwell noted that an alternate member assists the commission with public education and outreach activities and when necessary, may serve as a voting member if one or more regular members of the commission are unable to attend a meeting. The terms of service for Messrs. Kowalski and Schwartz will expire July 13, 2024.

Mr. Cobb, Chairman of Administrative, Fiscal Affairs and Zoning Committee, reported:

Motion (Cobb-Ratsavong) carried unanimously to approve the October check reconciliation in the amount of \$2,425,656.33, and the November bill listing in the amount of \$1,603,068.24.

Mr. Cobb announced the 2023 budget meeting schedule as follows:

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
Budget Presentation	11/9/2022	7:30 PM
Budget Hearing	12/14/2022	7:30 PM
Budget Adoption	12/14/2022	7:30 PM

All meetings will be held at the Springfield Township Building, 1510 Paper Mill Road, Wyndmoor PA 19038.

Mr. Cobb read into record the 2023 Budget Statement. In summary, the projected 2023 budget proposes a balanced operating budget for 2023 of \$18,697,151 with a real estate tax rate of 4.516 mills and an earned income tax rate of 1.0%. As a result of the 2023 budget projections, the typical taxpayer will realize no tax change to their 2023 real estate tax, and an increase of \$12.56 in the annual refuse service fee. The typical household in Springfield Township with a \$175,400 property assessment will pay \$792.10 in real estate taxes in 2023, which is the same as in 2022 and 2021. The 2023 preliminary budget will be available for inspection in the office of the Township Manager and in the Township library beginning on November 10, 2022, and will be posted on the Township website. The Board of Commissioners will consider comments on the budget during their workshop meeting on December 12, 2022, and as part of a budget hearing and budget adoption on December 14, 2022.

Mr. Cobb announced that the Springfield Township Zoning Hearing Board will meet on Monday, November 28, 2022 at 7:00 PM at the Springfield Township Building. Mr. Cobb summarized the Zoning Hearing Board agenda, and announced that copies of all applications are on file in the Code Enforcement Office and may be viewed during normal business hours.

Ms. Ratsavong, Chair of Parks and Recreational Resources Committee, reported:

Motion (Ratsavong-Cobb) carried unanimously to appoint Robert McGrath of Wyndmoor to fill an unexpired term of service as a member of the Springfield Township Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee. Dr. McGrath's term of service shall expire May 12, 2025.

Motion (Ratsavong-Wilson) carried unanimously to appoint Lee Abberley of Wyndmoor to fill an unexpired term of service as a member of the Springfield Township Parks & Recreation advisory Committee. Dr. Abberley's term of service shall expire May 12, 2024.

Mr. Lee opened the meeting to public comment. No public comment was received.

Mr. Wilson requested that the Board meet in executive session to discuss the testimony received earlier from Ms. Shuman. Mr. Lee asked Mr. Garrity if the Board was permitted to do so. Mr. Garrity advised that would be permitted as the Board is seeking the advice of the solicitor, which is privileged and confidential information.

Mr. Cobb thanked everyone for their comments this evening. He stated that there are times when the Board differs, but one matter they all agree on is there is no room for bigotry, hate and racism.

Ms. Ratsavong acknowledged that Veterans Day is on November 11, and she thanked all veterans for their service.

Motion (Ratsavong-Cobb) carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Taylor
Manager/Secretary

MT:cmt
11/16/22