

PINE CREEK TOWNSHIP
MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 5, 2023

The Pine Creek Township Board of Supervisors held their regular monthly meeting on April 5, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., with Supervisors John M. Reese, Dean L. Edwards, Jr., and Kenneth J. Packard present.

Also present: Rhonda and Benjamin Sweeney, Deb Reese, Bonnie Nichols, Walt Bierly, Ken Leitch and Matt Stover of the Avis Fire Company, Brandon Coleman and Jim Hess of the Woolrich Fire Company, Pam Smith, Douglas Byerly, Kevin Ferrara, Rick Macklem, Jaime and Matthew Grieco, Casey Lowmiller of Jersey Shore Area EMS, Dustin Council, Police Chief Dave Winkleman and Thom Rosamilia, Esquire

Meeting Minutes

Chairman Edwards asked if there were any changes or additions to the minutes from the March 1, 2023, monthly meeting.

Supervisor Packard requested that the meeting minutes be amended to state he did not call DEP about the Woolrich Fire Company for allegedly dumping wash water into the storm drains as suggested by Brandon Coleman, Chief of the Woolrich Fire Company. On Page 3 of the March 1, 2023, meeting minutes.

Chairman Edwards made a motion to approve the March 1, 2023, meeting minutes as amended by Supervisor Packard; seconded by Supervisor Reese, MCU.

Financial Report & Invoices

Supervisor Packard made a motion to approve the invoices and financial report as submitted; seconded by Supervisor Reese, MCU.

Public Participation

Doug Byerly

Doug Byerly introduced himself as a candidate for Clinton County Commissioner.

Rhonda Davis Sweeney

Rhonda Davis Sweeney introduced herself and encouraged everyone who speaks during public participation to introduce themselves as well, so everyone knows who they are and that to provide transparency. She then apologized for speaking out at the last meeting to address Michele Whitney's statements about the meeting minutes during procedural time when the Supervisors were trying to approve the meeting minutes.

Rhonda Sweeney also addressed several comments made by Ms. Whitney during the March meeting, pointing out that: (1) it was the wrong time during the meeting for Ms. Whitney to address the minutes, adding that the public has nothing to do with the approval of the minutes; (2) the Right To Know Law does not require a response to any questions from the public, the Supervisors can simply listen to the questions and if she is interested in transparency she should put her requests more specifically to the Board in writing; (3) there are exceptions to

the Right To Know Law which the Watchdog Group should be aware of due to the fact that their complaint filed against Lamar Township for not responding to the request for a copy of the annual audit was dismissed; (4) the Township is also not required to provide the public with a draft of the minutes.

Mrs. Sweeney said she also believes that Michele Whitney's husband, Mr. Ferrara, appropriately waited until public participation during the last meeting to make a statement but his lack of transparency was that the Supervisors were not given a copy of the statement. Since the statement included all kinds of figures, how can the township consider when they were not given a copy, adding that donations are not required to be shared under Right to Know.

Rhonda Sweeney then stated that she is not sure how Secretary Darlene Macklem can be any more specific in her minutes, which were also questioned, and commended the Secretary for the minutes.

Rhonda addressed comments about the blinds being drawn in the office, stating she is familiar with the law, as she practiced as an attorney for many years, and executive sessions are not to be revealed to the public, even in the minutes, and whether the blind is up or down is of no consequence when holding an executive session.

She then commended Supervisor Packard for participating in the last Executive Session because for 30 minutes prior to the last meeting he refused to attend the executive session in the office and instead sat in the meeting room while the other officials were preparing for the meeting.

She also questioned Supervisor Packard as to whether he answered his cell phone when called by Supervisor Edwards while Supervisor Reese was on vacation and if he had his cell phone with him at the meeting, for constituents who may need to reach him.

Brandon Coleman, Chief of the Woolrich Volunteer Fire Company

Brandon Coleman, Chief of the Woolrich Volunteer Fire Company, introduced himself to those in attendance, stating he is a 28-year life member of the WVFC and has held the position of Chief since 2004. He was born and raised in Woolrich and worked for the Woolrich Park, Woolrich Pool, Woolrich Church, Rich Manor, and was a police officer for Pine Creek Township for five years.

Mr. Coleman said he would like to "tell the full story" and provided the following information regarding what was brought up during the last meeting.

- In the 1990's Pine Creek Township established a fire tax for the purpose of assisting the Woolrich and Avis Fire Company's with meeting the needs of the Township. Since the fire tax was established, the real estate tax assessment increased in the early 2000's, however, the fire tax did not increase.
- In 2022 PCT gave Woolrich Fire Company \$17,342.23, which included \$7,342.23 from the fire tax and a \$10,000.00 donation and Avis Fire Company receives similar amounts.
- The total cost of fire protection for Pine Creek Township is less than \$40,000.00, which is below neighboring municipalities of similar size and population. The support provided by Woodward Township to their fire

company is \$136,000.00 a year and Wayne Township is well over \$50,000.00 per year.

- The individual stated, “he and others do not know why and where the money goes”, and that is not true as he himself was a member and Treasurer of the WVFC, contradicting his comments and not telling the full story.
- As for grants, the WVFC does everything possible to obtain funding through grants for projects and operational costs. Over the past ten years, the fire company has received hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant monies to pay for upgrades to air packs, hose, gear, vehicle rescue equipment and hand equipment. Most recently a \$30,000.00 grant was awarded to the fire company for a project that includes purchasing a UTV with fire and land rescue capabilities. There are three different grants and a trust being used for that project.
- Grants received by the WVFC benefit the community at no cost to residents.
- As to the State grant application, after reaching out to other municipalities, they have not received information from their fire officials either and going forward this information will be used to help all Clinton County Fire Companies be aware of what they are required to do.
- As to NFPA Standards, they are only standards and Pennsylvania is not a NFPA State.
- The individual spoke of ISO rating, however, did not mention that the lower the number the better the rating. The best ISO rating in Clinton County is three and that is held by City of Lock Haven because they have paid staff. The next best rating is held by Pine Creek Township which is a four and is 100% volunteer service. That alone is a money saver for residents on their home fire insurance.
- The individual spoke of foreign fire tax monies which are better known as relief funds that come from insurance companies to the State for distribution and are regulated as to allowed expenditures and audited by the State.
- The current funds of the Woolrich Volunteer Fire Company include monies that were raised and maintained by the hard work and endless hours of members. These funds indicate the fire company has a high standard of fiduciary responsibility of its finances.
- In 2016 the fire company purchased a new engine that cost \$500,000.00 and did not request help with this purchase.
- The current estimate to replace WVFC’s almost 20-year-old tanker is \$925,000.00 and these funds will ensure the funding for the purchase of the unit. I am not sure why this was an issue because the individual raising the issue has in public ridiculed and disagreed with two neighboring townships for purchasing and putting monies into new fire equipment.
- The individual spoke of his ethical duty to report an executive meeting with Dunnstable Township on August 22, 2022. If the individual believed there was a violation, he could have reported it to the appropriate agencies, rather than provide confidential information at a public meeting. However, he brought this out seven months later to “grandstand and belittle” the WVFC, and his figures were incorrect.
- Dunnstable did not give the WVFC a donation for two years, which was not guaranteed money, but rather a donation. The contract amount for services was paid and the contract amount (\$10,000.00) was based on prior contracts. The negotiation with Dunnstable Township resulted in a 10-year contract for fire protection with an increase in the annual contract amount to cover the

\$10,000.00 over the term of the contract and a guaranteed donation based on the current assessed value of properties.

Mr. Coleman ended his statement with the claim that the individual being referred to is a resident and not a taxpayer.

Old Business:

Generator for Municipal Building and Police Office

Chairman Edwards reported that the cost to purchase generators for the municipal building and the Pine Creek Township Police Office is \$11,603.00.

Supervisor Packard made a motion to approve purchasing generators for both the municipal building and police office; seconded by Supervisor Reese, MCU.

New Business:

Casey Lowmiller, EMS Chief of Jersey Shore Area EMS

Casey Lowmiller, EMS Chief of Jersey Shore EMS gave a presentation about the history, response area and various challenges facing JSAEMS. Highlights of the presentation include:

- Citizen's Hose EMS transitions from Basic Life Support to Advanced Life Support adding Paramedics to the ambulances in 1986.
- Citizens Hose Company and Larry's Creek VFC merged in 2002.
- Provides coverage to 19 municipalities covering 525 square miles.
- Challenges include – declining volunteerism; community support for fundraising events; increased costs of equipment, apparatus and services; staffing; payroll; increasing call volumes; unfunded federal mandates; and poor reimbursement from insurance companies.

Chief Lowmiller asked the Board of Supervisors to consider providing financial support to Jersey Shore EMS by donating a portion of the township's Act 13 Distribution; enact an EMS tax of up to 0.5 mills; or purchase Ambulance Subscriptions for residents at a cost of \$70 per household.

Horses of Hope Donation Request

The Board tabled discussion of the donation request from Horses of Hope.

Advertise 2023 Road Projects

The Board discussed the 2023 Paving Project in Briarwood Development and the Tar & Chip Road Project which includes various roads in the Township.

Supervisor Reese made a motion to advertise the road projects for bids and schedule the bid opening for 7:00 pm on May 3, 2023; seconded by Supervisor Packard, MCU.

Letter of Resignation from Russell Finch – Pine Creek Township Planning Commission

Supervisor Reese, who is also a member of the Pine Creek Township Planning Commission reported that Russell Finch submitted a letter of resignation to the Board of Supervisors resigning from his position on the Planning Commission effective March 15, 2023.

Supervisor Reese made a motion to accept the resignation from Russell Finch; seconded by Supervisor Packard, MCU.

Planning Commission Appointments

Supervisor Reese made a motion to appoint John Blesh to fill the vacancy on the Planning Commission and appoint Dean Edwards as an Alternate Planning Commission Member; seconded by Supervisor Packard, MCU.

Clinton County Association of Township Officials (CCATO) Convention

Chairman Edwards made a motion to approve Township Officials attending the CCATO Convention scheduled on June 1, 2023; seconded by Supervisor Reese, MCU.

Pine Creek Township Police Department (PCPD)

Chief Winkleman stated that previously the Township Solicitor represented the Pine Creek Township Police Department in matters that require legal counsel such as a shooting incident. However, Solicitor Rosamilia also works part-time in the District Attorney's Office, and it would be a conflict of interest for him to represent the Pine Creek Township Police Department.

Chief Winkleman said he spoke with Attorney Paul Ryan, and he is willing to be the Solicitor for the Police Department.

Chairman Edwards made a motion to appoint Paul Ryan as solicitor for the Pine Creek Township Police Department; seconded by Supervisor Packard, MCU.

Chief Winkleman reported that the Police Department received the cameras purchased through the grant.

Roadmaster's Report

Roadmaster John Reese presented the Roadmaster's Report for March 2023, as follows:

1. Snow removal (six storms)
2. Removal of snow fence
3. Vehicle maintenance – serviced park equipment; cleaned up trucks after storms and serviced the street sweeper and loader
4. Road maintenance included opening drains; clean up after storms; and sweeping intersections and in residential developments

Supervisor Packard questioned whether the 2017 Police Vehicle was placed for sale on MuniBid and Supervisor Reese said he is still waiting on the part to repair the cruiser.

Supervisor Reese also suggested that the Supervisors list the Roller, Chevy Truck and Mack Truck for sale on MuniBid.

Supervisor Reese then made a motion to list the Roller, Chevy Truck and Mack Truck on MunicBid; seconded by Supervisor Packard, MCU.

Woolrich Park

Chairman Edwards reported that County GIS mapped out the Woolrich Park for the Township and the 2600 ft. for the proposed walking path, which the Board hopes to make the path a mile long.

Chairman Edwards said he would also like to install two bathrooms and a pickleball court. He said that Resident Patti Hess has agreed to prepare a grant application for \$250,000 for the Township to make improvements to Woolrich Park.

Pine Creek Township Website

Chairman Edwards reported that the township website is being upgraded and will include a new township logo.

Chairman Edwards reminded attendees that they are limited to three minutes during public participation.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Edwards adjourned the meeting at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene S. Macklem

Darlene S. Macklem, Secretary