

MINUTES

SWATARA TOWNSHIP

REGULAR MEETING II

DECEMBER 13, 2023

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

1. **Call to Order**: President Zubeck called the Regular Meeting II of the Swatara Township Board of Commissioners to order at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 13, 2023. The meeting was held at the Swatara Township Municipal Building, 599 Eisenhower Boulevard, Harrisburg, PA.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**: President Zubeck led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **Moment of Silence**
4. **Roll Call**: Commissioners Christine Zubeck, Shaela Ellis, Michael Tuckey, Jeff Varner and Richard Boudier were present. Also present: Manager Jim Fosselman, Assistant Manager Kim Kaufman, Solicitor Kevin Hall, Director of Public Safety and Sergeant-at-Arms Darrell Reider, Director of Planning and Zoning Robert Ihlein, Director of Public Works Todd Webb, Fire Chief Mike Ibberson, and Secretary Karen Alleman.
5. **Announce Executive Session**: An executive session was held to discuss a personnel matter.
6. **Township Honor Roll Community Service Award – Dominick Costanza**: Commissioner Boudier added former Commissioner Dominick Costanza's name to the Honor Roll plaque in the Hearing Room. Mr. Costanza served the 8th Ward of the Township for twenty-four years (1970-1994). He was also the Emergency Management Coordinator for nineteen years (1975-1993). His daughter, Deb Miller unveiled the name plaque.
7. **Visitors Requests and Comments: Beth Sviben, 1371 Dayton Road**: Thanked Commissioner Boudier for his service to the Central Dauphin School District and the Township where he always advocated for the best of the taxpayers and transparency. It has been her honor to have Commissioner Boudier as a mentor and friend. Commissioner Boudier thanked Ms. Sviben.
8. **Motion to Approve Agenda**: Commissioner Boudier made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Varner. Motion carried unanimously.
9. **Motion to Approve Items on Consent Agenda**: Commissioner Tuckey made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Commissioner Varner seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Ellis announced the hiring for the front desk position, going into the new year, may still be temporary. President Zubeck asked Commissioner Ellis the plan for

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filling the position at the front desk. Commissioner Ellis responded she was advised by counsel to state it may be a temporary position which will be discussed in the new year if it moves forward. President Zubeck said the plan of the current Board is to fill the position. She said this position has moved to more of a service provider position and read the job description. The temporary employee currently filling the position has been taking on the tasks as described. Motion carried unanimously.

- A. Monthly Departmental Reports
- B. Committee Reports
- C. Codes Report
- D. Approval of Hiring - Front Desk/Assistant Position
- E. Adoption of Swatara Township Safety and Loss Control Policy
- F. Approval of 2024 Humane Society Agreement
- G. Approval of Police Ride Along Requests for Freese and Toro

10. **Consideration of Minutes: Regular Meeting I of December 6, 2023:** Commissioner Tuckey made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting I minutes of December 6, 2023, as presented. Commissioner Varner seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

11. **Reports:** Monthly reports are posted in the lobby of the municipal building.

- A. **Manager's Report:** Manager Fosselman said all Township staff are a great group of people, all having the same goal of working to help the residents of Swatara Township. This past year has been a great year.
- B. **Treasurer's Report:** Mr. Fosselman presented the November 2023 Treasurer's Report. Commissioner Boudier made a motion to approve the November 2023 Treasurer's Report, as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Tuckey.

Commissioner Ellis had a question regarding the General Fund. The November balance is \$730,565.39, the budget that was advertised shows \$1.5 million for the year end estimate. She asked Mr. Fosselman if he was anticipating \$800,000 coming in before the end of the year. Mr. Fosselman said the recently approved infrastructure loan in the amount of \$1,400,000 will be received in December and added to the General Fund.

Commissioner Ellis had a question regarding the Capital Reserve Fund. There was about \$2 million taken out during the course of the year, would it be replaced before the end of the year? Mr. Fosselman said most likely not, the Stormwater Fund still owes the General Fund money.

President Zubeck asked Mr. Fosselman how much money is owed to the Stormwater Fund. Mr. Fosselman said over \$1 million is owed to the Stormwater Fund. After

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December 15 all unpaid stormwater accounts will be turned over to Portnoff for collection.

President Zubeck said the Stormwater Authority should be self-sustaining, the General Fund should not support the Stormwater Authority. The Township has an aging infrastructure that must be repaired, and the Stormwater Fund has always been underestimated. If the money owed comes in, we will be close to where we need to be with stormwater. The fund has been underfunded since 2018. In 2020 the Board cut taxes, which was almost \$1 million out of the budget. Combine that with the fact that Federal COVID money came in and for three years the Township has \$1.3 million in Federal COVID money to fill that hole. In 2023 there was no Federal COVID money. A timely balanced budget was passed in 2023 with no tax increases. A balanced budget with no tax increases will also be passed this evening.

Motion carried unanimously.

- C. **Solicitor's Report:** Solicitor Hall said the Norfolk Southern tax trial has been scheduled for the week of April 22, 2024. That trial is in the Dauphin County Court of Common Pleas. On December 4 Solicitor Hall argued the Smith Land Development appeal before the Commonwealth Court. He expects it will be a couple of months until a decision is made in that case.
- D. **Swatara Rising Comp Plan:** Director Ihlein presented his report to the Board. The I-83 project continues with demolitions on Derry and Paxton Streets. Many of the businesses disrupted by PennDOT have relocated within the Township. The Mall property owner has given businesses until January 31 to vacate the property. Mr. Ihlein has received plans for the demolition of the Mall. It will take most of 2024 to demolish the Mall. Bass Pro Shops will remain on the property. New construction should begin in 2025. Protecting neighborhoods is an important part of code enforcement, he thanked the Board for their support of the Department. He thanked Commissioners Boudier and Varner for their service on the Board.
Commissioner Ellis asked if 2nd and Charles would stay at the Mall. Mr. Ihlein thought they would be leaving but he has not heard anything regarding that business.
- E. **Fire Services/EMS Report:** Chief Ibberson presented his report to the Board. There were 105 calls for service, mutual aid was given 25 times and received mutual aid 21 times. The average response time was 4 minutes and 52 seconds. The average turnout per incident was 7.5. Paxtang Borough responded to one call for service. He thanked Commissioners Boudier and Varner for their time on the Board. He appreciates everything they have done for Fire Services.

Chief Albertson presented the Life Team report. Life Team responded to 283 incidents in the Township and mutual aid responded to 21 EMS incidents. Average response time was 9 minutes and 40 seconds from time of dispatch to on scene. Life Team offers a Minutes Matters class to teach stop the bleed, CPR and other training to the public. Please contact them if you are interested in classes.

- F. **Public Safety:** Director Reider presented his report to the Board. The Department handled a total of 1,347 calls for service. He thanked Commissioners Boudier and Varner for all of their years of service. He said it was a pleasure to work with them over the years. Coffee With A Cop will be held tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m. A senior citizen Scam Jam presentation will be made by the Attorney General's Office to help seniors avoid scams. Shop With A Cop was held in December, it was very successful.

Director Reider asked his wife, Shelly to stand with him at the podium. She has been by his side for the last several decades. He then announced he was submitting his letter of retirement. He has been employed by Swatara Township for the last thirty-five years. It has been one of the greatest joys and honors of his life. He thanked the Board for all of the support they have provided. The Township will be left in good hands, the men and women of the Police and Fire Departments are second to none. The leaders in the Department won't miss a beat after his retirement. He was sworn in on March 6, 1989 and would not have traded his career for the world. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve this Township.

President Zubeck couldn't help but think of all the Boards and Commissioners he has seen since 1989. She thanked him for his service and everything he had done. He has been a great Director, Chief, mentor to many, good council and offered good advice, opinions, knowledge, and leadership. His presence will truly be missed.

Commissioner Tuckey thanked Director Reider for all his service. He feels the department is great because of his guidance and leadership along with many others in the police department.

Commissioner Ellis thanked Director Reider for his years of service. She served on the Police Advisory Board and appreciates the time she served with him on that Board as well as the Board of Commissioners. She congratulated him on his retirement.

Commissioner Varner said it was an absolute pleasure to work with him. He hopes he enjoys his retirement.

12. **Consideration of Ordinance: 2024 Budget:** The budget has been advertised. President Zubeck asked for a motion to consider an amendment to the budget. Commissioner Tuckey made a motion to consider an amendment to the budget, seconded by Commissioner Varner. President Zubeck asked Mr. Fosselman to explain the amendment.

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Mr. Fosselman said Director Reider asked for an administrative assistant position, who would be a current staff member. The original budget end of year balance was \$1,070,935.58, with this additional staff and fringe benefits that go with it, the end of year balance will be \$1,033,779.58.

President Zubeck said there was a vehicle in the budget, and Director Reider is foregoing the vehicle for this position. A lease payment that ended freed up some money in the budget to make this position possible. The position is necessary to keep up with monumental paperwork required for accreditation of the Department.

Director Reider said when the budget was prepared, he knew it would be tight. He didn't ask for any additional officers. This year happened to be a year when three vehicles should be replaced. The Township's mechanic said the vehicles were in good shape and two vehicles would be replaced instead of three. Command staff has asked for this position because of added unfunded mandates put on us by the State. This would be a way to get what we needed administratively while saving money for the Township. President Zubeck asked if we were at full complement for police officers. Director Reider said we were.

Commissioner Ellis asked the Solicitor if the amended budget would have to be readvertised. Solicitor Hall said changes can be made to the budget once it's advertised. The standard is that you are not going to make significant changes to either the milage rate, which is not happening in this circumstance, or any change that's going to be an increase in excess of ten percent. The Board always has the opportunity in the new year to reopen the budget if it chooses to do so, but the same standards would apply.

The motion carried.

President Zubeck asked for a motion to approve the 2024 Budget as amended. Commissioner Tuckey made a motion to approve the 2024 Budget as amended, seconded by Commissioner Varner.

Commissioner Ellis had concerns with where the budget is in regard to not being able to reimburse the Capital Reserve Fund. It's been stated for the entire time she has been on the Board that at least a quarter of the budget should be available in case of an emergency in the Capital Reserve Fund. That amount should be \$4.5 million dollars and we are nowhere near that, we are at \$1.9 million. She will not be able to vote for the budget this evening as presented.

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President Zubeck had concerns with the 2020 budget when the Board was looking at a nearly \$1 million tax cut. She was told at the time that the budget was sustainable. She has nothing against tax cuts, her concerns were slow revenues and increased spending. There was a tax increase in 2013 that was supposed to sustain the Township for ten years. We are in year thirteen of a budget that was passed as a ten-year budget. She was concerned that money was taken from the Capital Reserve Fund to pay for the tax cut, about \$400,000 at the time. When COVID happened, we received \$1.3 million in Federal Relief money. We had money to pay for the hole that was created. The 2023 budget was passed with almost \$2 million less than what the prior Board had in 2022 to work with. This year we are passing a balanced budget with no tax increases. Expenses have continued to increase due to inflation. We expect \$250,000 in tax revenue to vanish in the coming year as PennDOT has mitigated businesses and residences for the I-83 project. Additionally, several businesses have received reduced tax assessments this year. To deal with these challenges we have looked for cost savings as we continue to meet the Township's needs for services. Examples include reduction of engineering expenses by \$490,000 in the past two years. Paved or assisted in paving four miles of Township roads that were not paved for at least a decade. Increased collection of business privilege taxes by ten percent by collecting fees from businesses that had not paid their taxes. Saved costs in public works, fire and police by using our own mechanics to perform vehicle maintenance that had been contracted out. We have applied for grants and county funding totaling about \$4 million to advance projects. The Stormwater program has repaired or replaced 78 inlets and 480 linear feet of pipe to mitigate the potential devastation of residential flooding and replaced another 300 linear feet of failing stormwater pipe. We are working with a collection agency to collect stormwater fees from delinquent accounts. These fees are needed to continue infrastructure repair and meet federal requirements.

Commissioner Tuckey remembers sitting in the audience in 2019 when the tax decrease was proposed. It amounted to about \$12 per household. The businesses really made out, big businesses saved a lot of money. The tax collector was also thrown out of the building that evening. That is part of the reason he ran for Commissioner, a lot of things going on didn't make sense. He believes everything done by this Board has been in the best interests of the residents.

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President Zubeck asked for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Ellis	No
Commissioner Boudier	Yes
President Zubeck	Yes
Commissioner Tuckey	Yes
Commissioner Varner	Yes

Motion carried. This is Ordinance O-2023-07

13. **Consideration of Resolution: 2024 Tax Rates:** Commissioner Tuckey made a motion to approve the 2024 tax rates, seconded by Commissioner Varner. Motion carried unanimously. This is Resolution R-2023-54.

General Purposes	1.75493 mills
Fire Services	0.93580 mills
Debt	0.88960 mills
Ambulance	0.06700 mills
Total Tax Rate	3.64733 mills

14. **Consideration of Resolution: Tax Discounts and Penalties:** Commissioner Tuckey made a motion to approve 2024 tax discounts and penalties, seconded by Commissioner Boudier. Motion carried unanimously. This is Resolution R-2023-55
15. **Consideration of Ordinance: Vehicles and Traffic:** Commissioner Tuckey made a motion to approve the vehicles and traffic ordinance, seconded by Commissioner Varner. Motion carried unanimously. This is Ordinance O-2023-08

16. **Visitors Requests and Comments:**

- A. **Wendy Schaeffer, 1071 3rd Avenue:** Thanked Commissioners Varner and Boudier and Director Reider for their service. She asked for an update to the no left turn into Dunkin Donuts westbound on route 322. Director Webb said the engineer is looking at products to use and coordination of a traffic signal company to assist with closure of the highway.
- B. **Tom Connolly, 345 North Harrisburg Street:** Thanked Commissioners Varner and Boudier for their service. Thanked Director Reider for his years of service and has served Swatara Township well. Under Director Reider's service we saw the return of the K-9 program, formation of a MCSAP unit, and HEAT Team. He noted Ed Troxell's presence in the audience and recognized him for his service to the Township. He recognized Beth Sviben for representing Region I on the Central Dauphin School Board.

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- C. **Shane Steele, 613 Barbara Drive:** Thanked Commissioner Boudier for his service to the Township and School District. Thanked Commissioner Varner for his service to the Township. He thanked Director Reider for his service to the Township.
- D. **Ed Troxell, 620 North 67th Street:** Thanked Commissioner Boudier for assisting him in his campaign for Commissioner. He is thankful for people like him in this world that serve from a real blessed heart. He thanked Commissioner Varner for his service to the Township. He wished him the best of luck in future endeavors. He thanked Director Reider for his service.

17. **Possible Stormwater Violations for Investigation:** None at this time.

18. **Commissioners Requests and Comments:**

A. **Commissioner Ellis:** She offered best wishes to Commissioner Varner on his next endeavors and thanked him for his service. She thanked the outgoing school board director Beth Sviben for her years of service on the school board and also for advocating for Swatara Middle School Student Government Day to be named after its founder, Richard Boudier. She thanked Commissioner Boudier for his decades of service and dedication to Swatara Township. It was an honor to be able to run for office her first term with him. Different sides of the political spectrum came together, and she is very thankful for the time she has served with him, and his mentorship and friendship. She wished everyone Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, Happy Hannukah, Happy Kwanza and Happy New Year.

B. **Commissioner Boudier:** He thanked Chief Reider for his leadership in the police department which he feels is the best in Dauphin County. He feels privileged to be leaving this position with Chief Reider and wished him the best of luck in the future.

After twenty-eight years of serving on the Board of Commissioners, this is his last meeting. Over those years he had the privilege of meeting and working alongside some special people, some of whom became very close friends. He had some good times and experiences representing the people of Swatara Township. Over those years he owes thanks to so many people that he can't remember them all, they know who they are. He mentioned a few, his late wife, Bertie, his family members, some of them in attendance this evening. They gave him moral and loyal support along the way, which he couldn't have done without them. He thanked his family. He thanked the residents of Swatara Township for giving him the opportunity and honor of serving them over the years. He thanked some of the employees for their assistance given to him, Karen Alleman, Jim Fosselman, Deb Miller, Todd Webb, Mike Ibberson, and Chief Darrell Reider, plus many others unnamed. He mentioned some of his specific accomplishments: a traffic signal at the intersection of Lindle and Keckler Road, the elimination of tractor trailers accessing the rail yard by way of Keckler Road, a traffic signal improvement of a left turn arrow at

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Route 441 and North Harrisburg Street which has been approved and will be completed next spring. The Welcome to Swatara signs were his idea too. He has enjoyed helping residents with their concerns, all they need to do is call their Commissioner. He thanked everyone for the opportunity he has had. He wished the newly elected Commissioners the very best in their work here on the Board, in the years ahead. He wished everyone a great holiday season.

C. **Commissioner Tuckey**: He thanked Commissioner Boudier for all of his years of service. He had the honor of knowing his wife, she was a great lady. He got to meet his family. He wished Commissioner Boudier the best. He thanked Chief Reider for his service over the years and wished his family nothing but the best with many years of happiness. He thanked Commissioner Varner, he had a great time working with him and appreciates all of the help he has provided in the last two years. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

D. **Commissioner Varner**: He has never been one to be long winded, he is not going to start now. He had been thinking of this evening and what to say for a while. It is hard to articulate all the different emotions. He offered his most heartfelt and sincere thank you to everyone he has worked with and helped and mentored him along the way. He thanked current and former commissioners, staff, and the Chief, who have all helped him along the way. He appreciates everyone who has helped him along the way and made this a heck of a ride for the last twelve years. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. He wished the new Board luck in the new year.

E. **Commissioner Zubeck**: She thanked the entire Board first and foremost for instilling their faith in her as President of the Board the last two years. She appreciated the faith and trust placed in her the last two years and allowing her to run the meetings. It is the staff that manage the day-to-day operations, and they do an amazing job. She is proud of the, in her opinion, minimal administrative staff that does amazing work. She can't thank them enough for their support in assisting her over the last two years. She thanked Commissioner Boudier for his many, many years of service to Swatara Township. She has known him a long time and has always appreciated his dedication and commitment. She has also known Commissioner Varner for a long time. She has grown a deeper respect for him, he doesn't say a lot from time to time, but when he speaks it means something. He does a great job of articulating points. He has brought a high level of intelligence to the Board and the budgeting process. She has enjoyed serving with him as President and Vice President over the last two years. She is excited to see the Landmark Sign on Route 322 welcoming visitors to Swatara Township. There are a lot of good things to look forward to. She respects Commissioners Varner and Boudier for their dedication to their families, especially Commissioner Varner. He is always running his kids around and doing things with them, still making time to do the important job he has

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done for the past twelve years. She wished everyone a Blessed Holiday Season and Happy New Year.

19. **Presentation by President Zubeck:** President Zubeck presented Commissioner Boudier with a plaque commemorating his outstanding dedicated service to the residents of Swatara Township from January 1, 1996 to December 31, 2023. President Zubeck then presented Commissioner Varner with a plaque commemorating his outstanding dedicated service to the residents of Swatara Township from January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2023. She thanked both gentlemen for their service.
20. **Adjournment:** Commissioner Boudier made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Varner. Motion carried unanimously.



Karen Alleman, Township Secretary