

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE MEMBERS OF
SWATARA TOWNSHIP AUTHORITY**

The special meeting of the Swatara Township Authority was held on September 2, 2021, at 5:00 P.M. The following members were present: Castellano (Chairman), Cichy (Vice Chairman), Mancuso (Treasurer), Johnson (Secretary), Werner, Murphy, Lawson, and Belles. Also present were: Miller (Business Manager), Marino (Administrative Assistant), and Coccoresse (Salzmann Hughes, PC).

Chairman Castellano called the meeting to order at 5:04 P.M.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Chairman Castellano gave a brief re-cap of the discussion from the Board Meeting of August 18, 2021, and the flow of tonight's Special Meeting. Chairman Castellano presented an example of the impacts of one COVID-19 positive case to the Authority. She then stated that an Executive Session will be held if necessary. Chairman Castellano then introduced the visitors that were present; Mr. Varner (Union Steward), Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Hummel.

Chairman Castellano began by opening discussion regarding the Authorities masking policy. Chairman Castellano stated that the current policy follows the *Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)* guidelines where unvaccinated employees are required to wear a mask at the treatment plant, township building, and when sharing vehicles. Chairman Castellano asked the Board if they would like to require all employees to wear a mask regardless of vaccination status or just unvaccinated employees. Mr. Johnson asked if the employees are using disposal mask. Chairman Castellano stated that mask types are currently left up to the employee. Mr. Varner stated that the employees at the treatment plant have been using disposable mask. Mr. Varner also stated they had two employees wear an O2 sensor while wearing mask and the O2 alarm sensor went off after a few seconds. Mr. Thomas stated that a concern with wearing the mask is contamination from their current work environment. Ms. Mancuso stated that she read information regarding a study done comparing two different areas where mask was worn and not worn, and they had the same number of COVID-19 cases, and she believes that there is not enough evidence to show whether wearing a mask would be effective. Chairman Castellano stated that she believed that masking would have been more effective if we would have reached the 75% vaccination rate. Mr. Johnson stated that in his opinion, it should be left up to the employee whether they wore the mask. Mr. Lawson stated that he believes wearing a mask protects the people you are around. Mr. Thomas stated that the vaccine does not stop an individual from getting the virus, yet they are not required to wear a mask, and can still pass the virus along to others. Mr. Coccoresse stated that the *CDC* guidance for vaccinated individuals who came into contact with a COVID-19 positive case states that the vaccinated individual does not need to quarantine, and they are tested after five days, watch for symptoms, and wear a mask. He also stated that if an unvaccinated person comes into close contact with someone that tested positive for COVID-19 they would be required to quarantine. Mr. Werner asked if there is a current policy on masking or is it more of a guideline. Chairman Castellano stated that it is a policy to wear a mask if vaccinated. Mr. Belles asked if the current policy is what is recommended by the *CDC*. Mr. Coccoresse confirmed that it does match up with the current *CDC* policy and it should be enforced. Mr. Thomas asked if the *CDC* has guidelines on masking vaccinated individuals.

Mr. Coccorese stated that the *CDC* currently states that they recommend fully vaccinated individuals to wear a mask indoors and in highly occupied areas.

Mr. Lawson recommended everyone wear a mask no matter their vaccination status when in a shared space. Mr. Werner asked if there has been an insurance increase due to unvaccinated status. Chairman Castellano stated that we have not been notified as of yet of any increases. Mr. Murphy stated he would recommend that employees wear a mask when social distancing is not possible, in vehicles, washrooms, wear safety glasses, and to also report when they are not feeling well. Mr. Lawson asked if weekly testing for the unvaccinated employees would be a possibility, and if it is then that would be an option for unvaccinated employees at their own expense and on their own time. Mr. Johnson asked if consideration has been made for antibody testing which has been proven to be more effective than the vaccine.

Mr. Murphy motioned that all employees – regardless of a vaccination status – should be wearing a mask when unable social distance, when riding in vehicles with other employees, or when in shared spaces in which social-distancing is not possible; with the exception being issues of safety. Mr. Werner seconded, Mr. Johnson was a no vote, and the motion carried.

Chairman Castellano opened discussions regarding the vaccine or to make the vaccine mandatory for employees. Mr. Lawson suggested that we continue to encourage the vaccine. Chairman Castellano then asked how long the Board would like to encourage the vaccine and continue the incentive program as it expires September 30, 2021. The general consensus is to let it expire on that date with no extension.

Chairman Castellano then stated that since there is not going to be a vaccine mandate that the Board members would have to start sharing the responsibility of handling COVID positive situations. Chairman Castellano recommended having a list of Board Members in descending order of assignment to the Board, she will take the initial calls that come in and then would recommend a Board member handle that with legal and the supervisors. Chairman Castellano

Chairman Castellano adjourned the Regular Meeting at 6:42 P.M. to go into Executive session.


Chairman Castellano reconvened the Regular Meeting at 7:18 P.M.

Chairman Castellano discussed the current COVID leave policy. Mr. Coccorese clarified that the childcare leave is up to 12 weeks paid leave where 2/3 of the time is covered and the employee can choose to backfill the remaining 1/3 time with their own leave or take it without pay. Mr. Johnson asked how much COVID leave had been used to date. Chairman Castellano stated about 118 days. Mr. Cichy stated that he would recommend the policy continue until September 30, 2021, unless the federal government continues the policy past that point. Ms. Mancuso motioned to have the current COVID leave policy expire naturally on September 30, 2021, unless the Federal Government has extended the program, in that case we will follow suite with the government. Mr. Murphy seconded, and the motion passed.

Mr. Johnson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Murphy seconded, and the motion carried.

Chairman Castellano adjourned the meeting at 7:41 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,


Paul R. Johnson
Secretary