

**LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2025**

SUPERVISORS:

Danielle A. Duckett, Chair
Michael Twersky, Vice Chair
Janine Martin
Tessie McNeely
Jimmy Chong

STAFF:

Mimi Gleason, Township Manager
Jamie Worman, Assistant Township Manager
Michelle Farzetta, Office Manager
Neil Stein, Esq., Solicitor
Fred Zollers, Director Public Works
Paul Kenny, Police Chief
Jim Hersh, Township Engineer, Gilmore
Chad Dixon, Traffic Engineer, Bowman Company
John Farrell, Project Manager and Emergency Management Coordinator
Melinda Haldeman, Finance Director
Mary Trocino, Assistant Finance Director

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chair called the hybrid meeting to order at 7:08 pm at the Lower Gwynedd Township Building and virtually on Zoom and led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

The Board of Supervisors met in executive session prior to tonight's meeting to discuss matters of real estate related to open space properties and the public works facility, and potential litigation related to pensions, zoning, and emergency services.

The Lower Gwynedd Township Parks and Recreation Board have revamped the summer concert series in Pen-Ambler Park. There will be one concert each month in May, June, and July, plus food trucks and face painting. Mike Greer will perform at the first concert on Wednesday, May 28th. Check the Township website for more information.

Presentation of proclamation to Ginger Baker, Manager at Giant, for her support of the Lower Gwynedd Police Department, and wishing her all the best in her retirement

Ms. Duckett spoke about Ms. Baker and everything that she has done for the Township and the community. Chief Kenny and Sergeant Henry of the Community Response Unit both thanked her for

what she has done to help promote the CRU and police events. Ms. Baker was presented with a proclamation and a plaque as a thank you.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Eric Rudolph, 537 Montgomery Road, spoke regarding his continued concerns with the noise from the chiller at Wissahickon Middle School. Even with the sound blanket that was installed, the sound continues to be an issue. He has spoken with the School District but sees little progress. Ms. Duckett asked whether his expectation for the Township was to stop the noise or enforce the noise ordinance, as compliance with the ordinance may not eliminate the noise. Mr. Rudolph said he wants the source of the problem to be eliminated. Ms. Duckett noted that the district is working on the plan agreed to at the meeting that Mr. Rudolph attended in December, but implementation was tabled at their last meeting. The Township cannot tell the School District how to respond to the neighbors' complaints or how to comply with the noise ordinance; we can only evaluate what the School District decides to do on their property and respond. Jim Jacquette, 413 Cedar Lane, asked if civil penalties were possible? The BOS asked if that could entail the police enforcing a "disturbing the peace" type provision, as they have in response to other noise complaints. Chief Kenny explained that would consist of a disorderly conduct citation that could be difficult to enforce in this situation. The BOS said they understand that the neighbors would like relief from the noise, but the Township needs to see what the School District decides to do. Mr. Rudolph stated that in the summer the building is not full, and yet the air conditioning is running all day. Ms. Duckett said the YMCA runs camp in the building so the air must be on.

BUILDING AND ZONING

Review Zoning Hearing Board application for 608 N. Bethlehem Pike and determine action to be taken, if any

The property at 608 N. Bethlehem Pike is in the Professional Office District. The applicant is looking for a special exception to permit the sale of "specialty" automobiles. Relief was granted in 2017 permitting a change from one non-conforming use to a different non-conforming use with 15 conditions. The applicant has since made improvements without the required permitting or the required land development process. They also have not completed the conditions of the 2017 decision. The applicant is now seeking the same relief that was approved in 2017 and has now expired. The applicant also is asking that condition #3, that a building shall be improved in accordance with the elevation provided in the original exhibits be excluded. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Twersky, to send Mr. Stein in opposition to this application. Motion passed 5-0.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Presentation of 2024 financial statements by appointed auditor Bob Kaufmann from Withum

Bob Kaufmann from Withum presented the auditor's report for the year ending December 31, 2024. Mr. Kaufmann reviewed the General Fund for the year versus the 2024 budget and the ending fund balances for all of the funds. Mr. Kaufmann stated that the fund balances were healthy, and no issues were found.

Consider approval of Wells Fargo's request to paint the leased building a new color

Wells Fargo has asked to make updates to the exterior of the building. Wells Fargo leases the building from the Township, and according to the lease agreement, the plans and changes need to be submitted and approved by the Board. Wells Fargo is proposing to paint the non-stone elements of the building grey and the doors and railings black. Carlos Mireles from Wells Fargo explained that Wells Fargo is looking to refresh all of their buildings with more of an earth tone appearance. All expenses for this change will be the responsibility of the bank. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Martin, to approve the proposed exterior updates to the building. Motion passed 5-0.

Consider appointment to Lower Gwynedd's Park and Recreation Board

Ms. Martin stated that there has been a vacancy on the Park and Recreation Board since the beginning of the year and recommends Natalie Cormier to fill this vacancy. Ms. Cormier also volunteers on the Fall Fest Committee and is the elected tax collector. Ms. Martin made a motion to appoint Natalie Cormier to a five-year term on the Parks and Recreation Board. Mr. Twersky seconded this motion. Motion passed 5-0.

Discussion about funding for the Wissahickon School District's School Resource Officer

The Wissahickon School District has notified the Township that they need to cap the cost for the School Resource Officer at \$110,000, the cost they expect to pay for a private armed security guard. Lower Gwynedd is currently billing the school district \$160,000 for 75% of the cost of salary and benefits for the SRO. Whitpain Township and Ambler Borough are considering a request for the three municipalities in the school district to split the funding gap equally. The BOS had a discussion, and they all agreed that if the other municipalities are willing to assist with the funding, then they would support an increase in funding for the upcoming year and then continue to work with WSD and the other municipalities to make a plan for the future. There are many benefits to the school district having an SRO present and they would hate for the students to lose that.

Presentation of draft Lower Gwynedd Township Sidewalk and Trails Plan

Mr. Farrell stated that Township staff have been working with Gilmore and Bowman on a comprehensive sidewalk and trail plan for the township. The main goal is to create a plan that will help guide decisions related to sidewalk and trail placement when we have land development applications and projects in the township. The draft plan was presented to the Parks and Recreation Board, the EAC and the Planning Commission for feedback. Tonight, we are looking for feedback from the BOS and then the final draft will be brought to the BOS for approval.

Mr. Hersh shared a draft of the trails and sidewalks map. The proposed pathways were highlighted in yellow to indicate the areas that to focus on for future funding on as grants or other sources become available. However, there may still be some isolated areas that may remain without a trail or sidewalk as they would be unrealistic. There are areas where the residents would have to give up some of their property, areas without curb and some that would have right of way issues. Some areas would need input from the County and PennDOT. Mr. Hersh also suggested requiring waivers for sidewalks and trails, as well as a fee in lieu, similar to what we do for trees, for land developments that are not on the priority routes, while priority routes could be highlighted in review letters with the recommendation not to entertain a waiver.

Mr. Dixon summarized the preliminary reviews that Bowman did of the twenty existing trail crossings of public roads. They have recommendations such as high visibility for crosswalks, pavement legends and flashing warning devices. They also looked at the compliance of ADA ramps to identify those that might need repair and areas where they might be needed. We will be using the Sidewalk and Trail Plan as a planning tool for public works to make the necessary updates with the road programs or possibly package them as a few projects per year. Potential priority crossings were identified for some feasibility considerations. This plan is a priority of the BOS, and they would prefer there to be no isolated neighborhoods long term. Feedback will be provided by the BOS in two weeks at the next meeting.

Consider acceptance of trail easement from Gwynedd Mercy University (GMU)

In 2023, GMU applied for a MONTCO 2040 Grant for pedestrian and stormwater management improvements. The BOS requested a formalized access easement for the public's general use of the pedestrian trail network through the university property. GMU signed the agreement, however it was never provided to the Township, as GMU did not receive the requested grant funding and the agreement was accidentally overlooked. Recently the agreement was rediscovered as incomplete. This agreement will formalize the public's right to access and use the trail network on the GMU property. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. McNeely, to accept the pedestrian trail easement through the GMU campus. Motion passed 5-0.

Consider authorization to advertise a public hearing for an Amendment of Conservation Easement for Penllyn Woods Park adding a notice requirement for Wissahickon Trails

The lack of cell service in certain areas of the Township has been a topic of discussion for several years now. A cell tower has been proposed at Penllyn Woods Park; however, approval was required by the Montgomery County Commissioners, due to the grant that was used to purchase Penllyn Woods Park from Montgomery County. The grant required "no change of use" to the park without approval. On April 17, 2025, the Montgomery County Commissioners approved the change of use with conditions intended to achieve a net conservation benefit. A public hearing is now required, as one of the conditions is to amend the park's conservation easement adding a provision requiring notice be provided to Wissahickon Trail about proposed future easement amendments. The hearing will be scheduled for June 24, 2025, as that will allow for the thirty-day notice period and the required advertising. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. McNeely, to authorize the advertisement for a public hearing to consider the conservation easement amendment for Penllyn Woods Park. Motion passed 5-0.

Consider authorizing seasonal help for the Public Works Department

Mr. Zollers is asking for a budget amendment to allow the hiring of seasonal employees to assist with grass cutting, trail maintenance, painting, roadway patching and sealing, general park maintenance and general building maintenance. The total cost to hire these employees would be \$56,336, increasing the Public Works wages from \$692,201 to \$748,537. The increase is more than offset by other wage line items where there are vacancies. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. McNeely, to approve the budget amendment. Motion passed 5-0.

Consider approval of a contract for accounting work

The Finance Department is seeking temporary help and recommends using DunlapSLK. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Martin, to approve a Professional Service Agreement with DunlapSLK. Motion passed 5-0.

Approval of invoice report -May 13, 2025

The BOS received the invoice report for checks dated May 13, 2025, totaling \$275,403.45. There were no questions or comments. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Martin, to approve the invoices dated May 13, 2025. Motion passed 5-0.

Approval of minutes - April 22, 2025

The BOS received the meeting minutes from the April 22, 2025, BOS meeting. There were no questions or comments. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Martin. Motion passed 5-0.

SUPERVISOR LIAISON REPORTS

There was no liaison reports provided.

STAFF UPDATES

There were no staff updates.

SUPERVISORS COMMENTS

The supervisors congratulated Ginger Baker on her retirement and reminded everyone to come out to Touch a Truck on May 17th and the first concert of the summer season on May 28th. Ms. Martin thanked the Lower Gwynedd police for their help with a bus accident near Shady Grove Elementary school.

Adjournment

Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Twersky, to adjourn the meeting at 8:55pm. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Farzetta
Office Manager