

**LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2023**

SUPERVISORS:

Danielle A. Duckett, Chairman
Michael Twersky, Vice Chair
Janine Martin
Kathleen Hunsicker
Tessie McNeely

STAFF:

Mimi Gleason, Township Manager
Jamie Worman, Assistant Township Manager
Michelle Farzetta, Administrative Assistant - Absent
Neil Stein, Esq., Solicitor
Fred Zollers, Director Public Works
Paul Kenny, Police Chief
Jim Hersh, Township Engineer, Gilmore
Melinda Haldeman - Finance Director

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chair called the hybrid meeting to order at 7:00 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 Lower Gwynedd Township Police Department has been re-accredited by the Police Chiefs of Pennsylvania's Law Enforcement Accreditation Program

Ms. Duckett congratulated the police department on their re-accreditation. She spoke of the process and guidelines that the department must go through to achieve this accreditation. Chief Kenny thanked Officer Tim Evard for all his hard work and dedication during the accreditation. Officer Evard came forward and photos were taken with the new framed accreditation.

Officer Kenny then recognized Officer William Henry (Townie) for all his hard work On the Touch- A - Truck event. It was a huge success, despite the rainy weather. Over 500 people attended the event held at Beacon properties on Sumneytown Pike. Officer Kenny then thanked all the officers and the staff for all their help, support, and dedication.

Ms. Duckett announced that the Board of Supervisors (BOS) met in executive session prior to tonight's meeting to discuss matters of personnel and litigation.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was no public comment.

BUILDING AND ZONING

Review of Resolution 2023-12 Accepting dedication of infrastructure from the Carriages at Lower Gwynedd

The Carriages at Lower Gwynedd townhome development is complete, and the 18-month maintenance period has ended. The developer is offering for dedication to Lower Gwynedd Township (LGT) certain sanitary sewer infrastructure, improvements, related appurtenances, and easements as indicated on the final land development plans. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Twersky, to approve Resolution #2023-12 accepting dedication of the sanitary sewer infrastructure. Motion passed 5-0.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Review of Houston Creek flood study recommendations and next steps

For two years, Gilmore, our Township Engineer, has been gathering information and performing analysis regarding the flooding that affects Brookside Avenue and Marion Avenue from Knight Road to N. Spring Garden Street. Meetings were held for the community, the school district, Ambler Yards, and the BOS to discuss the preliminary findings. Mr. Hersh is now discussing the next steps and making recommendations to the BOS.

Mr. Hersh reviewed all the options and fees associated with each. The options discussed were removing and/or enlarging the driveway bridge at 446 Marion Ave, installing a new basin at Houston and Knight Road, retrofitting the existing basin, and enlarging the area behind the dam on Wissahickon School District's property. Mr. Hersh reminded everyone that nothing will stop the flooding completely, but making improvements will help to reduce the flooding. Some of the improvements will require routine maintenance to make them effective. The costs associated with this project will be dependent on the option chosen.

There was also discussion regarding the stormwater on Francis Avenue. After a water main break a few years ago, the road required new paving, however that paving created flooding issues. Mr. Hersh said there will be a study conducted at the intersection of Francis Avenue and Knight Road. The study will help to show if reprofiling the road would help with the flooding issue. Bill Murray, 413 Brookside Avenue, shared some suggestions from residents affected by the flooding. These suggestions included adding cages, raising the curb height on the streets, and possibly utilizing the low laying ball field at the school. He also asked that communication be sent to the residents in that area when the next study is being conducted, as well as updates regarding decisions being made, as they are all affected.

Resolution 2023-13 Designating June as Pride Month in Lower Gwynedd Township

Resolution #2023-13 declares June to be LGBTQ month and directs the LGT staff to fly the Rainbow Pride Flag throughout the month at Veterans Memorial Park. This resolution would continue to be effective, unless or until it is revoked by the BOS. Mr. Stein clarified that this is a township message, not third-party messaging. This is a government action performing speech. Hanging this flag is completely permissible under the law. Ms. Hunsicker said that the American flag is all inclusive. By hanging the Pride Flag, you are doing the opposite and excluding those that are not a part of the group that associates with the flag.

Joan Zeller, 420 Brookside Avenue, feels that the American Flag is not inclusive. Unfortunately, there is currently a feeling of hatred for others in society. The Pride Flag has the colors of the rainbow and makes people smile.

Sandy Silbiger, 416 Brookside Avenue, says why not fly the Pride flag. She lives in a neighborhood with diverse residents who deserve to be represented. For one month we can do this.

Connie Dooly, 529 Penllyn Pike, said the American Flag speaks for everyone. We need to honor our veterans and what they have done for us. The Veterans Memorial represents their sacrifice and our freedom. If someone wants to hang a flag in front of their house that is fine, but not this venue.

James Kernaghan, not a resident of LGT, has been active on the LGT Facebook page regarding this topic. Mr. Kernaghan stated he has no opposition to the flag being flown; however, the flag should be flown at the township building, not Veteran's Park. Veteran's Park is a place to recognize the sacrifice of our veterans. It is shameful to fly the flag in that location.

Joyce Keller, resident of Whitpain township, spoke in support of the LGBTQ community. Ms. Keller said these individuals need to be treated equally, have a sense of safety and approval, and live in an atmosphere without the fear of being judged. We need to celebrate their identities and contributions, as well as their history and culture.

Harry Hellerman, 100 Coventry Lane, stated that there is room for the pride flag at the park.

Jennifer, not a resident from the township supports the flag. We need to give respect. If we don't like it, then don't look at it.

Ms. Duckett mentioned that previous BOS members did not want the flag flown at the township building, they wanted an alternate location. We hang various flags at Veteran's Park, as there are more flag poles at that location. Currently there is only one flagpole at the township building. This could change in the future.

Ms. Hunsicker stated that we have received several emails in opposition to the Pride Flag being flown at Veteran's Park. She asked her fellow supervisors to compromise and agree to hang the flag in an alternative location.

Ms. Martin spoke on behalf of the LGBTQ community. She stated that until a few years ago members of that community could not get married or even join the military. The VFW celebrates Pride month and estimates that there are roughly one million veterans who are part of the LGBTQ community. Veterans fought for the ideals of this country. The Pride flag is a statement of diversity and all members of our community. We are not taking away from the service they provided, we are simply hanging the flag under the township flag.

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve resolution #2023-13, seconded by Mr. Twersky designating June as Pride Month in LGT. Motion passed 4-1. (Ayes- McNeely, Duckett, Twersky, Martin; Nays- Hunsicker)

Discussion about Historical Marker Program Guidelines

The Historical Advisory Committee (HAC) has been working on guidelines for a new township historical marker program. The markers would serve as a form of visual recognition for places, events, innovation, organizations, and people that have a historical meaning to our community. Under this program both public and private buildings, structures, objects, sites, districts, and both cultural and natural features/landscapes could be recognized with a marker. Currently, LGT has no historical marker program. Matt Metcalf, chair of the HAC, spoke of the program and answered questions from the BOS. Mr. Metcalf explained that this marker program is a form of recognition locally. These markers would not be recognized at the state level as they have other criteria that need to be met. The design of the sign has not yet been decided. Township staff will be working on a design and will consult with the HAC to help make this recommendation.

Authorization to advertise an ordinance establishing the Lower Gwynedd Township Historical Markers Program

Mr. Stein has drafted an ordinance establishing the historical marker program. This ordinance would create chapter 1046, Establishment of the Lower Gwynedd Historic Marker Program. Ms. Martin asked if language should be added regarding any future boards choosing to “retire” a historical marker at some point in the future. Ms. Hunsicker made a motion to approve advertisement of the historical marker program with a change in the language to include information regarding retirement of a marker. Ms. McNeely seconded this motion. Motion passed 5-0.

Authorization to advertise ordinance creating tax credits for volunteer firefighters

During the month of April, the BOS discussed moving forward with a tax credit incentive for active volunteer firefighters from both Wissahickon Fire Company and North Penn Fire Company who are residents of LGT. An ordinance has been drafted that would authorize volunteers in either company to receive an earned income tax credit up to \$1,000 per year. Ms. Duckett made a motion to approve the advertisement of the tax credit for volunteer firefighters, seconded by Ms. McNeely. Motion passed 5-0.

Consideration of EAC programs and expenditures:

- **License to show the movie, “Kiss the Ground”, and related composting demonstration**
Rea Monaghan, member of the EAC, spoke regarding the showing of the movie “Kiss the Ground” and the compost demonstration. The movie will introduce residents to the idea of composting and encourage individuals to make small changes to their practices at home. The total fee to purchase the license for this movie is \$350. A compost demonstration will follow showing residents the various types of composting. There will be 15 compost bins, 1 tumbler and 5 kitchen counter compost collection bins raffled off. The total cost for this entire event will be \$1,722.72. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. McNeely to run both programs. Motion passed 5-0.
- **License to show the movie, “Winged Migration.”**
Lisa Brown, co-chair of the EAC, spoke regarding this event. The EAC is seeking approval to show the movie Winged Migration, a documentary on the migration patterns of birds, shot over the course of three years on all seven continents. A one-time license in the amount of \$250 needs to be purchased for this event. The date for this event is TBD. Sandi Silbiger, 416

Brookside Avenue, asked how and when these events are advertised. Ms. Worman stated that information is sent out through an e-blast, information is in our e-newsletter and there are posts on Facebook and Twitter. Ms. Brown also mentioned that nothing can be advertised until the events are approved by the BOS. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. McNeely, to approve the movie showing and license purchase. Motion passed 5-0.

- **Creation of the “Lower Gwynedd Going Green Award” and related expenses**

The EAC would like to establish a “Going Green Award” to recognize those within the township who have gone above and beyond in their efforts for sustainability. The areas of focus will be energy, water, sustainable land practices, waste minimization and community outreach and betterment. Nominations will be solicited via postcard mailings, the township newsletter and e-newsletter and local newspapers. The BOS asked if it would be possible to do more of the communication electronically to save trees. Ms. Brown replied that many do not receive e-blasts and other electronic communication. They want to make sure to reach all residents, businesses, schools, and community groups. Sending postcards would cover everyone. Ms. Worman clarified that the mailing lists we have for our paper newsletter, sent out twice a year, are only residential addresses, they do not include businesses. Ms. Hunsicker suggested possibly reaching out to the Chamber of Commerce for assistance, as they have taken over the Lower Gwynedd Business Association. She also stated that the businesses would probably be happy to leave flyers out for others to see advertising the award. There was also discussion regarding the deadline line for submissions and when to present the award. The EAC would like to present at the Volunteer event, however the BOS feels that would not be enough time. They could present the award at a BOS meeting. Ms. Duckett made a motion to approve a \$2,500 budget for this program, seconded by Ms. McNeely. The budget would cover all costs associated with advertising and plaques. Motion passed 5-0.

Resolution designating a Township applicant agent to close out COVID-19 funding

Ms. Gleason stated that township staff thought that this was closed, however FEMA contacted them saying it was not closed out. We were also informed that the previous township manager was still listed as the applicant. Therefore, an updated form needs to be completed and returned. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. McNeely, to designate Ms. Gleason as the Township applicant agent. Motion passed 5-0.

Approval of “Lower Gwynedd Township Cafeteria Plan” for optional employee benefits

The township’s health insurance coverage has moved to a high deductible plan. Employees and supervisors can choose to contribute to a health savings plan (HSA) to save for health care expenses. The township needs to adopt a “cafeteria plan” for these contributions to be deducted in payroll on a pre-tax basis. This plan will also allow eligible employees and supervisors to pay their portion of the premium through pre-tax payroll deductions and to choose the option of receiving a cash payment in lieu of health insurance coverage. This plan will be retroactive to April 1, 2023. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. McNeely, to approve this plan. Motion passed 5-0.

Consideration of agreement with Econ Partners for grant administration

LGT staff is looking for Econ partners assistance with the administration of the RACP grant for the new Public Works Facility. The township is also permitted to seek assistance from ECON Partners with grant

applications or administration, on an as needed basis. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Hunsicker, to approve this agreement with ECON partners. Motion passed 5-0.

Review of financials YTD and Balance Sheet - April 2023

The BOS received the YTD financials and memo for the April 2023 expenses. The BOS thanked Melinda for her work.

Approval of invoice history - April 2023

The BOS received the invoice history for April 2023 totaling \$936,988.34. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Hunsicker, to approve the invoice history. Motion passed 5-0.

Approval of minutes - May 9, 2023

The BOS received the meeting minutes from May 9, 2023, BOS meeting. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. McNeely, to approve the minutes. Motion passed 5-0.

SUPERVISOR LIAISON REPORTS

Updates on Township Volunteer Commissions from Supervisor Liaisons

Ms. Duckett made a motion to table this item until the June 27, 2023, meeting. Ms. McNeely seconded this motion. Motion passed 5-0.

STAFF UPDATES

Pedestrian improvements by the schools

Mr. Zollers mentioned that improvements will be made at the intersection of Houston Road and Knight Road. The crosswalk will be changed to thermoplastic which last longer than the paint currently used. This will be completed before the start of the 2023-2024 school year. There will also be new yield to pedestrian signs installed. Chief Kenny stated that the speed bumps will be changed to yellow to make them more visible. James Tolliver, the Crossing Guard at the intersection, will be getting a lighted handheld stop sign, as well.

SUPERVISORS COMMENTS

Ms. McNeely congratulated the Police officers on the reaccreditation and thanked them for all their work in the community.

Ms. Hunsicker echoed Ms. McNeely's comments.

Ms. Martin also thanked and congratulated the police officers. She also thanked them for all the hard work with the Touch a Truck event. To all those who came out regarding the Pride Flag, she thanked them for coming out and speaking. Ms. Martin also wished everyone a Happy Memorial Day and to remember why we celebrate this day.

Mr. Twersky stated that tonight was a good example of democracy. In the end we are all citizens of Lower Gwynedd and Americans. We can agree to disagree and do it respectfully.

Ms. Duckett also thanked the police and those that came out for the Pride Flag to speak about their passions, equity, and inclusion. This year they want the young residents to know that they are included and accepted. She also wished everyone a Happy Memorial Day and asked everyone to remember those who sacrificed their lives for us.

Board of Supervisors Minutes

May 23, 2023

Adjournment

Ms. Duckett made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:54pm, seconded by Mr. Twersky. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Farzetta

Michelle Farzetta
Administrative Assistant