LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2026

SUPERVISORS PRESENT:
Danielle A. Duckett, Chairman
Michael Twersky, Vice Chair
Janine Martin
Andrea Brockway
Jimmy Chong

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

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance
The Chair called the hybrid meeting to order at 7:07pm 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 (BOS) met in executive session prior to tonight's meeting to discuss matters of potential litigation regarding property, permits, and emergency services; and matters of personnel related to police.

BUILDING AND ZONING

Public hearing for BET's conditional use application proposing to redevelop the Spring House Corporate Center at Norristown Road and Route 309 with new office, apartment and retail buildings
A Court Reporter was present to open the hearing. Ms. Duckett stated that the attorney for BET was unavailable therefore the conditional use hearing is postponed until December 8, 2026. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Twersky, to continue the meeting until December 8, 2026. Motion passed unanimously.

Consider authorization to initiate the adoption process, including advertisement of a legal notice for a public hearing, of an ordinance amendment revising MF-3 district setback regulations from Route 309 for the Spring House Corporate Center

Jamie Worman explained that BET's conditional use plan was revised since it was last presented to the BOS. The existing office building would be demolished and a new Berkadia building constructed in its place and the new apartment building would be located where the current Berkadia building stands. In making this change, the applicant found a setback conflict along Route 309. The code adopted in the summer requires a 200-foot front yard setback for multifamily apartments and office buildings. The proposed amendment would provide a 50-foot front yard setback along Route 309 to accommodate the relocated apartment building.

Ms. Worman stated that the action requested was only authorization to begin the formal process. The amendment would be sent to the Montgomery County Planning Commission and the Township Planning Commission and will return to the BOS for a vote at a future date. There were no questions from the Board or the public.

A motion to authorize the initiation of the formal ordinance amendment and adoption process, including advertisement of a public hearing, was made by Ms. Duckett and seconded by Ms. Martin. The motion passed 4-0. Mr. Twersky recused himself.

Resolution #2026-23 approving 2-lot subdivision plan for 813 Plymouth Road
John Iannozzi, from HRMML, attorney for the applicant stated that all terms and conditions of the Township's draft resolution were acceptable to his client. The applicant proposed a 2-lot subdivision and requested that the required trails be 6 feet wide rather than 8 feet. Ms. Duckett confirmed with Mr. Hersh that a 6-foot trail would be acceptable and remain accessible. Ms. Duckett also noted that the Fire Marshal's review was included in the packet and that all fire concerns had been addressed. There were no further questions from the Board or the public. Motion to approve Resolution #2026-23 was made by Ms. Duckett and seconded by Mr. Twersky. The motion carried unanimously.

Consider approval of sewer easement for 1145 Stone House Road (Ingersoll House)
The property located at 1145 Stonehouse Road, the historic Ingersoll House, is currently under renovation. The property owners would like to install a sanitary sewer connection to the property. An extension of the existing sewer easement to the property line shared with the Township is necessary. The extension will allow the proposed sewer lateral to be installed and connected with the proposed improvements. There were no questions from the Board or the public. Motion to approve the sewer easement for 1145 Stone House Road (Ingersoll House) was made by Ms. Duckett and seconded by Mr. Twersky. The motion carried unanimously.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Presentation of 2027 Draft Budget
Melinda Haldeman presented the 2027 draft budget, grouped into general operating funds, sewer funds, and capital funds.

Fund structure. The general operating funds include the General Fund, the Street Light Fund, and the Fire Protection Fund, which will be renamed the Fire and EMS Fund in 2027. The Fire Hydrant Fund, which had only two-line items, will be merged into the General Fund. The sewer funds are the Sewer

Operating and Sewer Capital funds. The capital funds are the Capital Reserve, Stormwater, Traffic Impact, and Highway (liquid fuels) funds.

General fund revenues. Budgeted operating revenues total $12,875,000. Earned income tax is the largest source at 49 percent, budgeted at $6,300,000 against a 2026 projection of $6,500,000. The budget uses the low end of Berkheimer's estimated range and excludes prior-year collections, and Ms. Haldeman explained this approach as a conservative one. Berkheimer's commission is 0.93 percent, or about $58,000. Other revenue items included:

- **Business privilege tax:** budgeted at $600,000 for 2027, with a 2.25 percent Berkheimer commission or about $13,500. The higher 2025 collections shown in the presentation reflected one-time prior-year catch-up payments of about $235,000 related to the pandemic.
- **Mercantile tax:** budgeted at $250,000 against a 2026 projection of $280,000, reflecting an expectation of reduced consumer purchasing in 2027 due to inflation. It also has a with a 2.25 percent Berkheimer commission or about $5,600. It applies to businesses located in the Township.
- **Local services tax:** a $52 annual tax, budgeted at $460,000 against a projection of $465,000, with a 1.75 percent Berkheimer commission or about $8,000.
- **Real estate tax:** the second-largest revenue source at 18 percent budgeted at $700,000.
- **Interest income:** about $342,000, or 3 percent.
- **Transfer taxes:** budgeted conservatively because collections depend mostly on home sales. 2026 collections reached about $1,000,000, including $271,000 from the Sumneytown Pike sale in February, against a $700,000 budget for 2027.

Real estate tax increase. The total taxable assessed value in the Township is approximately $1.4 billion, 81 percent of it residential, with an average residential assessment of $287,000. Ms. Haldeman explained how assessments change through improvements, new construction, appeals, and lot mergers, and how interim tax bills are issued. She advised that homeowners who escrow taxes must forward interim bills to their lenders. The county's assessments are based on 1996 values, and the state calculates a “common level ratio” for each county estimates the ratio of a property’s assessed value to market value. Montgomery County’s common level ratio means the average residential market value in Lower Gwynedd is just under $1,000,000.

The real estate tax is the only tax rate the Township controls; rates for all other Township taxes are set by state statute. For 2027, staff is recommending a Township real estate tax increase for the first time in 15 years. The increase would cover the increase in debt service for the planned Public Works Facility, allow for increases in contributions to the volunteer fire companies, and fill the gap created by inflationary cost increases.

For a property owner in Lower Gwynedd, the 2026 total millage is 33.775, composed of 1.223 for the Township, 26.6 for the school district (including the Wissahickon Valley Public Library rate), and 5.952 for Montgomery County (including the Community College rate). The Township last raised its millage in 2012, while frequent school district and county increases drove a 48 percent rise in the real estate tax over that period.

The draft budget proposes increasing the Township millage from 1.223 to 1.629 mills, an increase of 0.406 mills. This equates to a 1.2 percent increase in the total tax paid. Ms. Haldeman explained that taxes are levied on assessed value but for the sake of clarity presented examples of the annual tax increase proposed based on tiers of market values:

Market Value	2026 Tax	2027 Tax	Difference
$250,000	$91	$121	$30
$500,000	$182	$242	$60
$966,833 (LG average)	$352	$469	$117
$1,500,000	$546	$727	$181
$2,000,000	$728	$970	$242

The Township currently has the fifth-lowest municipal millage in Montgomery County and would rank ninth-lowest after the increase if other municipalities do not raise their rates.

General fund expenses. Budgeted operating expenses total $12,389,000. Police is the largest department at 46 percent, about $5.7 million, most of it wages and benefits. Public works is 14 percent, about $1.6 million. Administration is 12%, and includes Township-wide technology, including laptops and software licenses, along with legal fees and insurance. The 2027 budget includes a proposed $10,000,000 bond issuance for the planned Public Works Facility, in addition to the $5,000,000 debt issued in 2024. In response to Supervisor Martin's question, Ms. Haldeman confirmed that the debt service figure of approximately $834,000 reflects both bond issues. She confirmed that debt service for the 2024 bond has been paid from surplus and is not tied to the millage increase.

Total budgeted revenues rise about 1 percent. Expenses rise 8 percent with the $10 million bond issuance, but only 2.9 percent excluding the new debt service. The increase reflects police contract wage increases and roughly 7 percent increases in health insurance and disability coverage. A $500,000 surplus transfer to capital funds is budgeted for 2027. A transfer of about $1,500,000 is planned for 2026, made up of the $500,000 budgeted amount plus additional transfer tax and prior-year tax collections that created most of the 2026 surplus.

In response to a question from Supervisor Duckett, Ms. Gleason stated that the only staffing change budgeted for 2027 is the conversion of a part-time Recreation employee to full-time. The additional police officer hired to allow for a School Resource Officer to be added to Wissahickon Middle School was added in 2026. There is a $5,000 increase for the ambulance company, and about $40,000 of the real estate tax increase goes to fire companies, split between the two fire companies.

Sewer funds. Sewer revenue is approximately $3.19 million, 91 percent from sewer fees paid by property owners, plus interest income of $269,390 (8 percent) and connection and assessment fees of about $21,000. Combined sewer operating and capital expenses are $3,304,000, with 49 percent going to sewage treatment by Ambler and 25 percent to allocated wages and benefits. The annual payment from the sewer operating fund to the general fund rises from $135,000 to $150,000 to cover technology and overhead. Ambler's capital share was budgeted at $325,000 pending final figures, which could be as high as $360,000, with any shortfall covered by Sewer Capital reserves. Ms. Gleason and Ms.

Haldeman explained that operating charges are based on flow from Lower Gwynedd's system to the treatment plant and capital charges are based on the Township's 36 percent share of treatment plant capacity. Ms. Gleason noted the importance of the annual inflow and infiltration program in reducing water in the Township's sewer lines which thereby reduces treatment costs.

Capital funds. Capital revenue includes grants of $991,000 (34 percent) and interest of nearly $500,000. The Traffic Impact Fund (Act 209 fees), Highway Fund (liquid fuels), and Stormwater Fund (tree contributions and anticipated cell tower lease income of $20,000) are restricted funds. The 2027 capital projects, excluding the Public Works Facility bond proceeds and expenditures, total about $2,384,000. The new Township Asset Maintenance Plan combines the 10-year vehicle and equipment plan and long-term road paving plan, with draft 10-year park and building plans. Proposed 2027 asset maintenance is $1,100,000, including $390,000 of liquid fuels paving against $363,000 in state aid.

Ms. Haldeman estimated capital cash reserves of about $13.5 million at December 31, 2026, of which $2.1 million is restricted. Planned 2027 spending would reduce reserves to about $12.4 million. The budgeted $500,000 transfer to capital reserves from the General Fund reduces the net use of reserves to about $600,000. The General Fund holds about $10 million and Sewer Capital about $7.5 million in reserves. Ms. Haldeman explained that reserves generate roughly $1 million in annual interest, fund projects ahead of reimbursable grant payments, and support the Township's bond rating from Moody's.

Supervisor Martin asked why a grant of about $250,000 for Ingersoll Park did not appear in blue. Ms. Haldeman and Ms. Gleason explained that black font indicates grants approved or applied for, while blue italics denote aspirational grants. The only application pending was the playground grant. Ms. Gleason stated that at the next BOS meeting, staff would request authorization to submit an LSA grant application for two Meetinghouse Road projects, a culvert replacement and storm pipe replacement. She also reported updated timing for the Oxford Park playground, with $100,000 in 2027 and the remainder in 2028, and noted that the gaga pit had been ordered and would be installed in 2026. She reported that the park and building asset maintenance plans were works in progress.

Process and schedule. Ms. Gleason stated that staff would return on November 17, 2026, to request authorization to advertise the preliminary budget. Changes may be made at that meeting but should be avoided afterward. The draft must be advertised for 20 days before the December 8 meeting, and a special meeting would be needed if later changes were made, because the budget must be adopted by the end of the calendar year. The presentation and draft budget would be posted on the Township website that week.

Ms. Martin, Mr. Twersky, and Ms. Duckett thanked Ms. Haldeman and staff for a comprehensive and understandable presentation. Ms. Duckett also thanked Finance Department staff members Sam Shafkowitz and Jessica Stawitzke for attending.

Consider approval of a proposal from Bowman to design traffic signal improvements at Bethlehem Pike and Tennis Avenue funded by a PA Green Light Go grant

Chad Dixson reported that the Township was awarded a $311,760 PennDOT Green Light Go grant for traffic signal upgrades at Bethlehem Pike and Tennis Avenue, with a local match requirement of $77,760. Bowman's proposal covers engineering, permitting, bidding, and construction-phase services for the components approved in the grant application. Mr. Dixson estimated a timeline of about two years to project completion, noting that signal poles and mast arms take 8 to 9 months to arrive after ordering once permits are issued. There were no questions from the Board or the public.

Motion to approve the Bowman proposal for the scope of work for traffic signal services at Bethlehem Pike and Tennis Avenue was made by Ms. Duckett and seconded by Mr. Twersky. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of invoice report for October 27, 2026

The BOS received the invoice report for checks dated October 27, 2026, totaling $118,560.25. There were no questions or comments. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Twersky, to approve the invoices dated October 27, 2026. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of minutes for the meeting of October 13, 2026

The BOS received the minutes from the October 13, 2026, meeting. There were no questions or comments. A motion to approve the minutes from the October 13, 2026, meeting was made by Ms. Duckett and seconded by Mr. Twersky. The motion passed 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Chair invited citizen comments, concerns, and questions on items not on the agenda. There were none.

SUPERVISOR LIAISON REPORTS

The BOS received the Liaison Reports for the Park and Recreation Board and the EAC. There were no questions or comments from the Board.

STAFF UPDATES

There were no updates from staff.

SUPERVISORS COMMENTS

The Supervisors thanked Ms. Haldeman and staff for the understandable budget presentation. Ms. Duckett thanked everyone for their work.

Adjournment

Ms. Duckett made a motion seconded by Ms. Martin to adjourn the meeting at 8:45pm. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Farzetta

Michelle Farzetta
Office Manager