

April 9, 2024

The regular meeting of the Ligonier Township Supervisors was held Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building with Chairman Dan Resenic presiding.

Members Present: Dan Resenic, Erik Ross, Stephanie Verna, Scott Matson, and John Beaufort.

Others Present: Township Manager Michael Strelac, Solicitor Dan Hudock, Chief of Police Michael Matrunics, Engineer Ben Faas, Emergency Management Coordinator Patrick McDowell, and Finance Officer Bethany Caldwell.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

1. Terrell Funk (Township Recreation Board member) – spoke about last week’s weather and the damage done to the trail. He recognized the Public Works Department for their fast repair of the trail.

Supervisor Verna asked about the scope of work the trail still needed.

Supervisor Beaufort asked if the state had opened up the culverts along 711.

2. Chris Furman, Esq. (representing the Pultz family) – spoke about Hidden Valley Road and requested the Township cease its onsite work for a variety of reasons (increased traffic, speeding, littering/dumping, runoff). He asked that the “Dead End” sign be moved closer to the road’s entrance near Darlington Road.

3. Michael Testa – spoke about Hidden Valley Road and had concerns a new cross pipe would direct stormwater onto his property. He asked what will happen to the trees that were cut down and the remaining tree stumps. He noted ambulances, fire trucks, and garbage trucks need to turn around and shouldn’t be doing so on private property.

Mr. Strelac explained state law says that the trees belong to the property owner and that is why they were left on the property. The township will remove the tree stumps once there are enough to warrant renting the equipment (weekly minimum).

4. Shannon Pultz – spoke about Hidden Valley Road and was concerned that plans to add an impervious surface will create more stormwater issues.

Supervisor Resenic asked about the other residents on the road – are they all in agreement?

Mr. Strelac noted that the first homeowner on the left has reported that they have experienced significant stormwater issues and has been asking the Township to do something about it as it has affected the condition of the road.

COMMENTS FROM THE SUPERVISORS

Supervisor Ross – Reviewed the first quarter budget report. Despite a one mill tax increase to offset increased police department expenses, the Township is doing more with less. He thanked staff and advised them to continue focusing on the worst roads in the Township, get them back up to standard

and scheduled in the 5-year maintenance plan. He further noted that the fire companies will benefit from less calls to remove trees on the road.

Supervisor Beaufort – Reported that each of the Township’s fire companies are averaging 22-25 calls per month, with one company having 124 calls year-to-date. The letter writing campaign has begun. With respect to Hidden Valley Road, he drove there and had questions about the planning. It looks like 50 trees were cut down. The trees are part of the Valley’s beauty. Are we putting in a 2 lane blacktopped highway, what was the idea? He disagreed that the police department was the sole reason for a one-mill tax increase and noted the LVPD were able to hold their budget flat for 5 years. Record inflation has caused everything to go up. He would like to see the Township do more project planning.

Supervisor Matson – Reported that he drove out to Hidden Valley and noted the trees that were cut down were dead and needed to come down, they were “woodpecker material”. Opening up the right of ways to the skyline allows the snow to melt faster and water to evaporate instead of freezing and creating icy spots on the road.

Supervisor Verna – Announced she is meeting with staff tomorrow to go over the first quarter’s numbers and would like this topic added to the next meeting agenda so that she can report back to the rest of the Board. She questioned why the Board is considering / accommodating the residents’ requests without first understating the purpose behind the Hidden Valley Road project and requested staff provide a project budget and analysis of what was spent to date. She noted additional work (clearing trees in the right-of-way and widening the road) was happening parallel to grant related work aimed at improving sediment and erosion control. She asked what the catalyst behind the additional work was.

Supervisor Resenic – Commended the Fire Departments, the Police Department and the Public Works Department regarding their rapid response to the heavy rains and flooding last week. They did a good job, no complaints. He asked Mr. Strelac to explain the Township’s Hidden Valley Road project later, towards the end of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A motion was made by Erik Ross and seconded by John Beaufort to approve the minutes from the March 26, 2024 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. County Planning & Development comments on zoning ordinance
2. Community Clean Up, April 27 – contact the Loyalhanna Watershed to volunteer
3. Letter from Mr. Furman, regarding Hidden Valley Road

REPORTS:

MANAGER

Mr. Strelac reminded everyone Dumpster Day is Saturday, April 20 from 8-noon. There was a major rain event last week, approximately 5 inches in 40 hours causing flooding. Public Works did a good job preparing before the storm hit, despite the deluge there were only two clogged catch basins / cross pipes. Finally, the Township’s next meeting was rescheduled to Wednesday April 24, at 4:30 pm meeting due to primary election taking place at the Municipal Building on Tuesday.

SOLICITOR

Mr. Hudock continues to work with staff on code enforcement issues.

POLICE

Chief Matrunics presented his monthly report.

EMERGENCY MANGEMENT

Mr. McDowell said they didn't receive many calls during the flooding, however, he noted that two of the calls were due to people ignoring and driving around "road closed" signs.

Supervisor Verna stressed the importance of following the signs and asked the public to consider how their decisions affect the community and first responders, including volunteer firefighters.

ENGINEER

Mr. Faas deferred to later in the meeting when he will be opening the seal coat bids.

TREASURER

Supervisor Verna read the fund balances as of March 31, 2024:

Fund Balances (month end)	March
General Fund	\$ 616,536
General Fund Reserves	\$1,067,425
Liquid Fuels Tax Fund	\$ 469,670
Capital Fund Reserves	\$ 31,046
Ligonier Beach Park Fund	\$ 122,213
Developer's Fund*	\$ 5,302
*Escrow	\$ 4,000
*Mill Creek Memorial Park	\$ 1,209
*Kids Corner grant	\$ 93
Total Funds	\$2,312,191

BILLS PAYABLE

A motion was made by Stephanie Verna and seconded by John Beaufort to approve the bills payable as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ordinance 2024-O-03 Property Maintenance Code:

Mr. Strelac provided a one page summary of the proposed changes.

A motion was made by Erik Ross and seconded by John Beaufort to advertise Ordinance 2024-O-03. Motion carried 4:1, with Supervisor Verna voting no.

Ordinance 2024-O-04 Preemption of 10-acre Sewage Exemption

Mr. Strelac explained state law says 10+ acre properties that have been owned since 1987 do not need to apply for a sewage permit or be inspected, unless a municipality has passed an ordinance stating otherwise. No action taken.

NEW BUSINESS

Bid Openings for the 2024 seal coat program:

Mr. Strelac reminded the Board the list of roads to be treated is before them and Myers School Road is to be double sealed.

Bid 1

Russell Standard – total \$229,316.62
unit price single seal coat is \$1.82 per square yard
unit price double seal coat is \$3.97 per square yard

Bid 2

Quaker Sales – total \$200,400.00
unit price for single seal coat is \$1.67 per square yard
unit price for double seal coat is \$3.80 per square yard

Bid 3

Midland Asphalt – total \$291,470.10
unit price for single seal coat is \$2.31 per square yard
unit price for double seal coat is \$4.35 per square yard

Supervisor Resenic asked about the aggregate specifications – no slag!

Supervisor Verna asked if the cost include flaggers – yes.

A motion was made by Scott Matson and seconded by Erik Ross to award the bid to Quaker Sales. Motion carried unanimously.

Annette Dee Hart Plan 3:

This consolidation plan was reviewed and recommend by the Planning Commission.

A motion was made by Scott Matson and seconded by Erik Ross to approve the Annette Dee Hart Plan. Motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Emily Pershing – asked about the Township’s project planning process.

Steve Skupas – asked about the next step in the zoning ordinance revision process.

Supervisor Verna advised a draft of the proposed ordinance and summary of changes can be found on the Township’s website.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM THE SUPERVISORS

Supervisor Beaufort – Asked about the Hidden Valley Road grant.

Supervisor Resenic – Asked what started this work at Hidden Valley Road? Mr. Strelac explained that the Township got a \$64k grant from the Conservation District. The standing orders from the Public Works committee are to tackle the worse roads. Supervisor Resenic asked if there were any complaints regarding the road. Mr. Strelac said yes, the first resident on the road is dealing with a lot of stormwater issues since the adjacent property was logged a few years ago. The road is narrow and has steep drop-offs. Supervisor Resenic asked about the road's right-of-way length – 33 feet.

Supervisor Verna – What was the catalyst to take on additional work, cutting trees, cutting the road wider? Removing the trees seems counterproductive to improving stormwater issues.

Mr. Strelac explained the Township will seed the area where trees were removed.

Supervisor Ross – Said some of the roads have been neglected and are in dilapidated condition and need brought up to today's standards. The road is 9 feet wide, emergency vehicles need access – if one slides into the ditch, how can we get a fire truck back there?

Supervisor Verna – Asked what were the reasons to do this work?

Supervisor Beaufort – Expressed his concern that (Hidden Valley) got out of hand. He asked that the Manager put the numbers together, track the labor and expenses, and compare it to the budget. He asked how much money have we spent so far and if there was a project budget.

Supervisor Matson – Said he thinks Mr. Griffith is doing a good job, holding people accountable. Said you have to remember that some of the maintenance work that should've been done over the years was not done. Some of our roads are just awful. We need to have long term planning. He agreed with previous sentiments that emergency management services did a great job during the heavy rains and flooding.

Supervisor Verna – Questioned how people are held accountable when there aren't project scopes and budgets established up front. Before taking a project on, there needs to be a defined scope and that should include how many labor hours, equipment hours, and materials are needed to complete the work, and make sure the purpose or goal is compelling and justifies the spend. She acknowledged Emergency Services and Public Works for their efforts during the storm.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

A motion was made by Erik Ross and seconded by Scott Matson to adjourn the meeting. All of Board was in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bethany Caldwell
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer