

MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP

The Board of Commissioners of Springfield Township met in regular monthly meeting on Wednesday evening, April 13, 2022, at 7:30 PM in the Springfield Township Building for the purpose of transacting the general business of the Township. The meeting was also offered in a live streaming feature. Mr. Graham announced that the video would be made available on the Township's website beginning Thursday, April 14, 2022. All members of the Board were present, with the exception of Mr. Standish. Mr. Graham presided.

Mr. Graham asked everyone to join the Board of Commissioners in a moment of silent reflection to honor the Ukrainian service members and civilians who have lost their lives or have been displaced from their homes as a result of the Russian invasion, and for the men and women across the world who are subject to political turmoil and human suffering as a way of normal life.

Mr. Graham led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion (Lee-Wilson) vote 6-0, dispensing with the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting and approving same as written and recorded in the official minute book of the Township.

Mr. Graham noted the absence of Commissioner Standish due to illness.

Mr. Graham announced that Andrew Freimuth was in attendance from the office of the Township Solicitor.

Mr. Graham recognized former commissioners Jim Dailey and Bob Gillies in the audience.

Mr. Graham announced that the Board of Commissioners conducted an executive session as part of their April 11, 2022 workshop meeting to discuss two personnel items, and one real estate matter.

Mr. Graham explained that at the March 9, 2022 meeting of the Board of Commissioners, the Board received public comment from Margaret Mary Burke, Oreland, encouraging the Board to reconsider its earlier decision to accept public comment at its meetings via advance e-mail, or in-person only. The Board discussed the various challenges associated with moderating public meetings in both an in-person and remote format at its April 11 workshop meeting without conclusion. The Board directed Township staff to survey surrounding communities in order to determine how they are presently accommodating public comment. The Board plans to discuss the topic at their May 9 workshop meeting.

Mr. Graham opened the meeting to public comment.

Mr. Graham then advised all in attendance that there would first be a public discussion regarding the Springfield Township Police Benevolent Association emblem. Prior to the meeting, four individuals expressed their desire to address the Board on the topic.

Liza Meiris, Secretary of the Cheltenham Branch of the NAACP, addressed the Board and expressed her displeasure with the use of the Thin Blue Line flag as the logo for the Springfield Township Police Benevolent Association. Ms. Meiris provided a lengthy history of the thin blue line flag. In conclusion, Ms. Meiris asked that the PBA choose a symbol that unites the community.

Mr. Graham recognized State Representative Napoleon Nelson.

State Rep. Nelson addressed the Board on the use of the thin blue line flag by the Springfield Township Police Benevolent Association. Rep. Nelson thanked the police officers for their service to the community. He also noted that while he is not personally a fan of the symbol that the PBA has chosen, he understands their decision and ability to use it. Rep. Nelson looks forward to further conversations on the topic and hopes that the police will find a symbol that works for everyone.

Koh Chiba, Chief of Staff for Congresswoman Madeleine Dean, read a statement on behalf of Congresswoman Dean thanking the Springfield Township Police Department for their service to the community. Congresswoman Dean shares the concern of the NAACP that the symbol chosen by the Springfield Township PBA creates division, and hopes that the PBA can choose a symbol that creates unity and solidarity.

Alexandra Klinger read a statement prepared by Ellen Stevenson, of Social Justice Indivisible. Ms. Stevenson wholeheartedly supports the Springfield Township Police Department, but believes the use of the thin blue line flag as the symbol for the PBA divides our community. Ms. Stevenson asked that the PBA develop a new symbol that unites the community.

Adam Goren, a long time Springfield Township resident, addressed the Board on the use of the thin blue line flag by the Springfield Township PBA. Mr. Goren expressed his appreciation for the hard work of the police officers, but that the chosen symbol is in conflict with the values of the PBA. As an example, Mr. Goren shared that the PBA supports the township little league teams, and he is thankful for that. However, he opined that the chosen symbol means different things to different people, and for him it communicates something insidious.

Nicole McInerny, Wyndmoor, addressed the Board regarding the use of the thin blue flag by the PBA. Ms. McInerny expressed her respect and reverence for the entire Springfield Township police department. She is against the thin blue line flag used by the PBA, and has been voicing her opposition since September 2020. Regardless of its origin, she believes it has been co-opted by white supremacists and its use should be discontinued.

Jenny French, Oreland, addressed the Board regarding the use of the thin blue line flag by the PBA. Ms. French recalled the night her husband took his life in 2011. She stated she was treated with the utmost sensitivity by the police officers. Ms. French suggested that the same

sensitivity should be offered to the police on the issue of the PBA symbol. Ms. French opined that perhaps the police are traumatized due to the COVID pandemic, rioting and other social protests. She suggested that perhaps more support should be shown to the police officers on a day to day basis.

Craig Williams, Cheltenham Township resident, read into the record a statement from his daughter, Lauren Camper, a Springfield resident. Ms. Camper received an envelope in the mail from the Springfield Township PBA that included the PBA symbol at issue this evening. Ms. Camper was appalled and threw the mailer in the trash. To Ms. Camper the blue lives matter flag symbolizes division in the community. In conclusion, Ms. Camper requested that the Board of Commissioners and the PBA consider the symbolism that is associated with the flag and how it makes some residents feel unsafe.

Evan Klinefelter, Wyndmoor, thanked the police officers for their service to the community. He is against the logo used by the PBA. Mr. Klinefelter wants to support the PBA but will not do so until the logo is changed.

Troy Frys, Wyndmoor, addressed the Board with regard to the Springfield Township PBA logo. Mr. Frys fully supports the police department as well as the original blue line flag on a black background. However, as a retired military veteran, he does not support any symbol that incorporates a modification of the United States flag. He hopes that the PBA discontinues the use of the current symbol in favor of one that incorporates the original blue line flag, to which he would support.

Jim Dailey, former commissioner, and Flourtown resident, addressed the Board and wished to clarify that he was an organizer of the “Back the Blue” rally held in 2020. The event was not intended to offend anyone. The event was very successful and attracted approximately 300 individuals. The sole purpose of the event was to honor our police officers. Mr. Dailey commented on statements attributed to Commissioner Lee in the Chestnut Hill Local as inappropriate. He stated that the flag in question means different things to different people as demonstrated by use of the flag at a Philadelphia Phillies game where two recently deceased PA State Troopers were honored. Additionally, streets were lined with the flag during the funeral processions for the two fallen troopers. Mr. Dailey remarked that this matter is dividing the community and needs to stop.

Jerome Dargo, Wyndmoor, retired Army vet, expressed his opposition to the use of the thin blue line flag by the PBA. He has never received a donation request from the PBA, but if he did he would not make a donation until the logo is changed.

Angelina Banks, Wyndmoor, addressed the Board regarding the PBA logo. Ms. Banks remarked that when she sees the logo she feels a sense of pride, strength and honor. She is not offended by the logo. Ms. Banks stated that she will always support our police, and they should be able to use whatever logo they wish.

Mike Egenoff, Flourtown, suggested that the police officers should be present to defend their use of the flag in question.

Linda Fields, Chair of the Montgomery Count Black Caucus, addressed the Board to inform them that she comes from a family of police officers, two of whom have been killed. One was killed by a white person and one was killed by a black person. Ms. Fields believes that an offense to one, is an offense to all and more consideration should be shown to those who are offended by the use of the flag. Ms. Fields implored everyone to dig out, don't keep digging in. She suggested we come together as a community and keep talking to one another.

Bob Gillies, former commissioner and a resident of Northwoods, acknowledged that the discussion over the use of the thin blue line flag is uncomfortable. He remarked that Springfield Township is unique. Mr. Gillies went on to say that Springfield is a united society and full of good people who support our police force. He opined that regardless of whatever symbol the PBA chooses to use for their organization someone will be offended.

Commissioner Lee asked for the opportunity to respond to comments that Mr. Dailey directed at him regarding an article in the Chestnut Hill Local. Mr. Lee suggested that what was printed in the Local was only a portion of what he sent to the paper. Mr. Lee said he did not call anyone a white supremacist. Mr. Lee said he has the utmost appreciation and respect for the police as his father was a Philadelphia police officer. He concluded his comments by suggesting that all groups can benefit from some sort of reform.

Mr. Graham wished to thank the Cheltenham Branch of the NAACP, Rep. Nelson, Koh Chiba from Congresswoman Dean's office, and former commissioners Dailey and Gillies for their comments.

Mr. Graham, Chairman of the Cultural Resources Committee, had no report.

Mr. Graham announced that the Township received a letter from Bonny Davis, Deputy Tax Collector, resigning her position as the appointed deputy tax collector.

Motion (Graham-Maxwell) vote 6-0 to accept the resignation of Bonny Davis, Deputy Tax Collector, effective April 13, 2022.

Mr. Maxwell commented that the Board asked Ms. Davis to resign her position.

Mr. Lee and Ms. Rasavong reported on behalf of Mr. Standish, Chairman of the Community Development Committee:

Motion (Lee-Ratsavong) vote 6-0 to adopt Resolution No. 1566, a resolution granting preliminary/final subdivision approval for the Pisani subdivision/lot line change involving the properties located at 811 and 813 Pleasant Avenue, Wyndmoor. The subject of the lot line change is to adjust the common boundary line between the two parcels in order to permit a detached garage located behind the home at 811 Pleasant Avenue, to be transferred to the property at 813 Pleasant Avenue.

Motion (Lee-Cobb) vote 6-0 to adopt Resolution No. 1567, a resolution granting preliminary/final land development approval to the Flourtown Swim Club, 1526-1528 Bethlehem Pike, Flourtown, for the construction of a new, 3,200 square foot clubhouse building and related improvements. Prior to recording the land development plan, the

swim club is required to revise the plans to resolve all issues set forth in the Township Engineer's review letter dated January 10, 2022, including the installation of stormwater management improvements to manage runoff from the proposed new construction.

Motion (Ratsavong-Wilson) vote 6-0 that pursuant to section 512.1 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the Board of Commissioners waive the formal land development review process for the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania in order to permit the placement of a 784 square foot modular building at the Bloomfield Farm property, 301-303 Northwestern Avenue, Erdenheim. The building will be utilized to conduct on-site testing of seeds and other plant life that are propagated and grown at the facility. In accordance with representations made by the arboretum, the building will be located on site for up to five years for research purposes.

Ms. Ratsavong announced that the Board of Commissioners will be conducting a municipal government workshop to educate the general public about land development review process. The workshop will describe the roles and responsibilities of the local and county planning commissions, the zoning hearing board, and Board of Commissioners. The workshop will be conducted on Saturday, May 21, 2022 at the Springfield Township Building beginning at 9 AM. Interested persons were instructed to pre-register beginning Monday, April 18, 2022 by visiting the Springfield Township website, www.springfieldmontco.org.

Mr. Wilson, Chairman of Cultural and Environmental Resources Committee, reported:

Mr. Wilson announced that during the month of March 2022, Springfield Township residents recycled 200.8 tons of materials with a householder participation rate of 78.4%. The net cost for the month was \$15,166.54.

Mr. Maxwell, Chairman of Public Works and Facilities Committee, reported:

On March 10, 2022, bids were received for the Mermaid Park Trail and Streambank Stabilization project. The project includes the construction of a perimeter walking trail, ADA compliant concrete ramps, a pedestrian bridge, streambank stabilization work, and landscaping. Two bids were received and ranged in price from \$391,550 to \$494,032. Both bids exceeded the project estimate and the Township Engineer believes that more competitive bids may be obtained by separating the trail construction from the streambank work.

Motion (Maxwell-Wilson) vote 6-0 to reject all bids received on March 10, 2022 for the Mermaid Park Trail and Streambank Project, and to authorize the advertisement of two bids describing separate and distinct scopes of work as follows: walking trail and handicap ramps, and streambank stabilization

Motion (Maxwell-Cobb) vote 6-0 to authorize the advertisement of bids for the Township's 2022 Highway Resurfacing Program. A total of 12 streets are proposed to be milled and resurfaced in 2022 at an estimated cost to the Township of \$364,228.00.

Mr. Lee inquired as to the project timeline. Mr. Taylor responded that the Board will award a contract in June and that typically the work is performed in August.

Motion (Maxwell-Ratsavong) vote 6-0 to authorize the sale of one (1) 1994 Wells Cargo enclosed utility trailer via the Municibid online public auction site. The equipment was donated to the Township for emergency management purposes and is no longer needed.

Mr. Maxwell announced that the Montgomery County Community Development Block Grant Program provides funding to local municipalities to complete projects that benefit low to moderate income neighborhoods.

Motion (Maxwell-Lee) vote 6-0 to adopt Resolution No 1568, a resolution authorizing an application to the 2022 Montgomery County Community Development Block Grant program for the project known as the 1200 Willow Grove Avenue Blight Removal project. The funding will be utilized to remove the former rectory building located at the former Seven Dolors Church property so that the area may be repurposed as a parking lot and stormwater management facility to serve the Township's recreation center.

Mr. Wilson wished to clarify that if the grant application is approved, it will be effective in 2023.

Motion (Maxwell-Wilson) vote 6-0 to adopt Resolution No. 1569, a resolution proclaiming Saturday, April 30, 2022 as Arbor Day in Springfield Township.

Mr. Maxwell announced that as part of the Township's annual Arbor Day celebration, the Springfield Township Shade Tree Commission will be conducting an Arbor Day ceremony on April 30 at the Springfield Township Municipal Campus. The celebration will include a ceremonial tree planting, as well as the distribution of twenty free trees. Pre-registration is required for this event.

In addition, Mr. Maxwell announced that Free Library of Springfield Township will be conducting various tree-oriented activities during the week of April 25. Mr. Maxwell concluded his comments by urging all citizens to join with the Springfield Township Shade Tree Commission to celebrate Arbor Day and to support efforts to plant new trees.

Mr. Wilson commented that in previous years trees were distributed on a first come, first served basis but that this year the trees will be given out via a raffle.

Mr. Maxwell also announced that a tree will be planted at the municipal complex and the tree will be dedicated in honor of past commissioner Glenn Schaum.

Motion (Maxwell-Wilson) vote 6-0 to direct the Township Manager to include on the Board of Commissioners meeting agendas in May, a discussion regarding the possible acquisition and/or condemnation of all or a portion of the 4.79 acre parcel owned by MEH Investments at 380-402 Haws Lane, Erdenheim for parks and/or recreation purposes.

Mr. Cobb, Chairman of Administrative, Fiscal Affairs and Zoning Committee, reported:

Motion (Cobb-Lee) vote 6-0 to approve the March check reconciliation in the amount of \$408,214.69, and the April bill listing in the amount of \$809,414.88.

Mr. Cobb announced that the Springfield Township Zoning Hearing Board will meet on Monday, April 25, 2022 at 7:00 PM at the Springfield Township Building. Mr. Cobb summarized the Zoning Hearing Board Agenda, and announced that the applications and plans are on file in the Code Enforcement Office and may be viewed during normal business hours.

Mr. Lee, Chairman of Public Safety Committee, had no report.

Mr. Lee commented that is good to see so many people in attendance at the meeting. The meetings are the best when people become engaged.

Ms. Ratsavong, Chair of Parks and Recreational Resources Committee, had no report.

Ms. Ratsavong announced that there is a proposal to place a scoreboard at Veterans Park. There will be a neighborhood meeting in the near future for residents to ask questions or make comment.

Mr. Graham reopened the meeting to public comment.

Jim Dailey, readdressed the Board and commented on a large pothole on Springfield Way at Haws Lane. He asked if the Public Works Department could take a look at it. He also wished to bring to the Township's attention a tree in the creek behind 501-503 Poplar Road that is obstructing the flow of water. Regarding the PBA logo and the article in the Chestnut Hill Local, Mr. Daily directly spoke to Commissioner Lee and said they respectfully disagree on the issue and invited Mr. Lee to have a conversation with him about it.

Alan Gary, Oreland, addressed the Board on the PBA symbol. Mr. Gary stated that he sent an email to all the commissioners on the subject, and was disappointed that he did not hear back from Commissioners Lee and Graham specifically. Mr. Gary is a strong supporter of the police department, and believes the PBA should be able to use whatever emblem they choose.

Maryellen Reeves, Glenside, addressed the Board regarding the BPA logo issue. Ms. Reeves remarked that the conversation has gotten ugly by using the terms "white supremacist" and "racist". Nothing gets solved when ugly terms are used. She asked that the Board continue the conversation but bring it to a level where it is not ugly.

Ray McMahon, Oreland, introduced himself as a retired Springfield Township police sergeant. He opined that if the Board's goal is to engage someone in a conversation, utilizing social media to call that individual a racist is not a productive way to start the conversation, and is not likely to accomplish anything. Mr. McMahon stated his belief that the thin blue line is not the same as blue lives matter. The thin blue line has been around since the 1890s and means nothing but respect for police officers. The police officers are good people, and he questioned why they are being attacked.

Angelina Banks, Wyndmoor, readdressed the Board. Ms. Banks cautioned against opening the door to "cancel culture" because once it starts there is no end. Canceling things that offend us is not the answer.

Michele Chesaitis, Oreland, addressed the Board on the use of the thin blue flag as the logo for the PBA. Ms. Chesaitis stated she was offended by, and disappointed with Commissioner Lee's comments in the article that appeared in the Chestnut Hill Local. Additionally, Ms. Chesaitis stated that she comes from a family of police officers, including her father. The flag in question has always meant nothing other than pride, courage and gratitude. She believes the thin blue line symbol was hijacked with the intention of dividing the community.

Commissioner Graham thanked everyone for their comments. Mr. Graham asked if any Board members wished to make comment.

Commissioner Maxwell thanked Mr. McMahon for his 30 years of service to the community. Mr. Maxwell indicated that he makes it a point to visit the police department fairly often in an effort to get to know the police officers. He suggested that other commissioners should do the same. Mr. Maxwell remarked that the symbol is not worn on uniforms, is not in or on patrol cars, and is not displayed by officers while on duty. He believes the matter should have been handled internally and not at a public meeting. The PBA should not be asked to change their logo because someone else doesn't like it. In conclusion, Commissioner Maxwell said it is a very unfortunate situation and thanked everyone for coming to the meeting to express their views.

Commissioner Cobb echoed Commissioner Maxwell's disappointment that the matter was debated at a public meeting. He noted the trauma that the officers experienced during the pandemic. He praised the police department for their good work on behalf of the community and hopes that the debate does not tarnish the reputation of the department.

Mary Helf, Flourtown, stated that every resident deserves respect and deserves to feel included. She stated her belief that the thin blue line flag has evolved into a negative symbol.

Dan Bennett, Wyndmoor, opined that Mr. Graham has a personal agenda and he should not be the president of the Board.

Alan Gary, Oreland, commended the police officers for refusing the offer of \$10,000 to change their logo.

Commissioner Ratsavong stated her belief that the public meeting is the proper forum for such a dialog. She offered to meet with anyone privately to discuss the issue. She has spoken to several residents who suggested that when they see the logo they have a fearful reaction and don't feel included. She stated her hope that the PBA will discontinue the use of the symbol while additional discussions occur.

Robert Gillies, Northwoods, stated that the PBA is a private entity and not part of township, and inquired how it became a matter for the Board of Commissioners to discuss.

Alan Gary, Oreland, wished to respond to Commissioner Ratsavong's comments about discontinuing the use of the symbol. Mr. Gary asked the Commissioners if they would be willing to step down if township residents found them to be divisive.

Mr. Gillies readdressed the Board and suggested the issue regarding the PBA symbol is outside the boundary of the elected officials.

Maryellen Reeves, Glenside, inquired as to the genesis of the conversation regarding the PBA symbol. Mr. Graham responded that a few members of the community felt the symbol was offensive to them. He suggested there was never a demand for the symbol to be removed or replaced. Mr. Graham noted that it was simply a request from the Board for the PBA to consider changing it.

Mr. Maxwell clarified that the discussion started when a banner with the PBA symbol on it was hanging across Willow Grove Avenue to advertise a car show. Mr. Graham said it began before the car show banner was observed.

An unknown member of the audience asked about the \$10,000 offer to the PBA to change the symbol. Mr. Graham clarified that the offer was to reimburse the PBA for expenses incurred by the PBA for clothing and promotional items. Mr. Maxwell clarified it was not taxpayers money as the \$10,000 was coming from a private donor.

Ray McMahon, Oreland, readdressed the Board on the PBA symbol. Mr. McMahon suggested that a request might be considered a threat if it were asked as many as five times as suggested by Commissioner Graham.

Michele Chesaitis, Oreland, readdressed the Board on the PBA symbol. She asked if there was a policy for addressing the Board of Commissioners at their public meetings. She was told anyone can address the Board on any topic. Ms. Chesaitis asked who ordered the PBA signs to be taken down at the little league fields. The Board was not aware of any such order.

Betty Ann McMahon, Oreland, addressed the Board and said the PBA is a private entity and therefore the Board of Commissioners has no authority to ask the PBA to change its symbol.

Mr. Graham informed all it was never a demand that the PBA change their logo, and that it was always the Board's intention to hold a public forum to solicit feedback from the community in this regard.

Michele Chesaitis, Oreland, readdressed the Board and suggested that after making a few peaceful requests to the PBA to change their logo, additional requests could be intimidating if made by one's employer.

Troy Frys, Wyndmoor, readdressed the Board and attempted to compare the Board of Commissioners requests to the PBA to a union labor negotiation.

John Geliebter, Oreland, a police officer in another jurisdiction, addressed the Board regarding the PBA symbol. He said the symbol is not meant to be racist, and that it means a great deal to police officers. He suggested that the Board should listen to both sides of the argument before drawing conclusions.

Angelina Banks, Wyndmoor, readdressed the Board and suggested that the most intimidating thing in society today is to be labeled a racist. She offered that the people who

support the use of the PBA symbol feel intimidated because they are expressing their support for the police. She concluded her comments by encouraging everyone to be strong and to stand up for what they believe is right.

Motion (Lee-Wilson) vote 6-0 to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Taylor
Township Manager