

Minutes of Meeting
Board of Commissioners
Springfield Township

The Board of Commissioners of Springfield Township met in regular monthly meeting on Wednesday evening, December 14, 2022, at 7:30 PM at 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. Lee announced that the video would be made available on the Township's website beginning Thursday, December 15, 2022. All members of the Board were present, with the exception of Mr. Graham.

Mr. Lee asked Mr. Taylor if there were any public comments received electronically prior to the meeting. Mr. Taylor responded that the one public comment was received from Joseph Alfonsi, of Oreland, who questioned the need for item #1 on the agenda, which would be discussed by the Board later in the meeting.

Mr. Lee asked everyone to join the Board of Commissioners in a moment of silent reflection honoring the service men and women who have placed themselves in harm's way in order to help preserve our safety at home and overseas.

Mr. Lee led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion (Wilson-Ratsavong) 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. Lee noted the absence of Commissioner Graham, and noted the presence of former Commissioner James Daily.

Mr. Lee announced that the Board of Commissioners conducted an executive session as part of their December 12, 2022 workshop meeting to discuss one personnel matter and one real estate matter.

Mr. Lee announced that at the November 9, 2022 meeting of the Board of Commissioners, the Board received public comment from Caroline Shuman, Flourtown, expressing her disappointment with the manner in which the local police department has handled multiple complaints that she has filed against her neighbor. Ms. Shuman also alleged that preferential treatment has been provided by the police to her neighbor due to the familial relationship with a member of the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Lee read a statement in response to Ms. Schuman's allegations, and assured her that there has been no preferential treatment requested by a Board member or provided by the police department.

Mr. Lee announced that at the conclusion of this evening's business meeting, the Board of Commissioners will conduct a budget hearing on the 2023 Budget. The Board will also conduct a special meeting to close out the business of 2022, and to adopt the 2023 Budget.

Mr. Lee opened the meeting to public comment.

Daniel Bennett, Wyndmoor, referenced a letter sent to the Springfield Township PBA from the Board of Commissioners requesting that the PBA change their logo or remove the words “Springfield Township” from the logo. Mr. Bennet inquired what the next step is with regard to the PBA logo. Mr. Lee responded that the Board is having ongoing discussions on the matter to determine the next step. Mr. Bennett opined that the Board is utilizing a bullying tactic to force the PBA to change their logo.

Ms. Ratsavong stated her strong belief that the logo must be changed because it is creating mistrust and divide in the community.

Mr. Lee said the matter was first brought to his attention by a constituent of his who saw a sponsorship sign with the logo on it at Marlow Field in Oreland.

Jim Daily, Flourtown, addressed the Board and asked where the proposed indoor practice facility at the Bysher Field complex would be located. Mr. Daily also asked numerous questions with regard to a proposed resolution that would prohibit the display of the thin blue line flag on all township property. Mr. Daily opined that the resolution as written is too vague to enforce. Mr. Daily also inquired what the total cost of the issue is to date.

Ms. Ratsavong restated her belief that the symbol is eroding trust and is causing harm in the community.

Mr. Gillies, Glenside, asked if there is currently a policy regulating the flying of flags on township owned flag poles. A discussion ensued on the process by which the Board voted on sending out a letter to the PBA asking that they change their logo or remove the words “Springfield Township” from the logo. Mr. Gillies opined that the way the Board is handling the matter is a violation of free speech.

Ms. Ratsavong suggested that many of her constituents feel the PBA symbol is harmful. Mr. Gillies and Ms. Ratsavong engaged in a back and forth dialog on the issue.

Mary Ellen Reeves, Glenside, questioned the genesis of the PBA logo issue. She suggested there is no evidence that the logo is harmful. She believes that the issue is causing division in the community only because the Board has brought it up as a topic of discussion.

Kevin Lawn, Erdenheim, stated that the issue of the PBA logo has morphed into something completely different than what is stated in the proposed resolution, and asked for clarification.

Mr. Maxwell asked if personal vehicles on township property would be searched, as he believes that will be the next thing to come up.

Daniel Bennett, Wyndmoor, read into the record the letter that was sent to the Springfield Township PBA requesting that they change their logo or remove the words “Springfield Township” from the logo. Mr. Bennett inquired about the cost of the letter.

Bob Gillies, Glenside, referred to the letter that was sent to the PBA which Mr. Bennett just read. Mr. Gillies stated his belief that the letter was a “sledgehammer” to the police and the PBA.

Mr. Lee, Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, reported:

Motion (Lee-Wilson) to adopt Resolution No. 1585 prohibiting the display or use of any image that depicts a black and white version of the American flag with a blue stripe, whether it be on Township property (including a township vehicle) or an employee (including an employee’s uniform) during the course of their regular workday or while representing Springfield Township in any capacity.

Commissioner Cobb asked for clarification on the Police Department uniform policy. Mr. Taylor provided that clarity. Mr. Cobb encouraged the Board to reconsider adoption of the proposed and to continue to listen to comments on both sides of this issue. He opined that the resolution seems to be a heavy handed measure directed at one group of employees and one that he believes will ultimately bring irreparable harm to the community.

In response to members of the public who question where are the people who have expressed their displeasure with the PBA logo, Ms. Ratsavong suggested that it is hard for some people who have a problem with the police to come forward and speak out against the logo. She believes if only one person is harmed, that one is too many.

Commissioner Cobb stated that he and Commissioner Lee met with members of the police department at which time the police stated they will not wear the symbol, and it will not be displayed on or in township cars or township property. Members of the police expressed why the symbol means so much to them, and why they want to wear the symbol outside of township business. Mr. Cobb again expressed his strong opinion that the action tonight seems punitive and heavy handed.

Commissioner Ratsavong said some of her constituents have observed the symbol on Township property when they have interacted with the police and they feel uncomfortable coming forward.

Commissioner Cobb urged the Board to continue to have conversations on the issue and listen to other points of view rather than inflame the issue that he believes is only getting worse.

Commissioner Lee asked for a clarification on the uniform policy. Mr. Taylor provided that information.

Mr. Wilson suggested the Board is confusing the public by blurring the lines between the police department and PBA. All Board members appreciate the police department. The concern

is when the PBA sends out solicitation letters showing the symbol and using the words “Springfield Township”, some individuals find that offensive. Simply stated, the symbol means different things to different people. Mr. Wilson stated that if one constituent is offended, it needs to be changed.

Commissioner Maxwell stated his belief that the issue surrounding the PBA logo is a political issue and not a racial one. Mr. Maxwell said he has been a commissioner for 7 years and in those seven years there have been no race-related complaints against the police department. He commented that he has been falsely accused of spreading rumors about one of his colleagues on the Board. He stated that there have been rumors that the PBA flag symbol has been seen on township police cars and uniforms. He stated those are false rumors as the symbol is not on the cars or on the uniforms. Mr. Maxwell stated he was not in favor of the letter that was sent to the PBA, nor is he in favor of the proposed resolution before the Board this evening. He reiterated that the whole issue continues to widen the divide in the community.

Commissioner Ratsavong acknowledged that the police have a difficult job. She noted that some people have had negative experiences when interacting with police. She stated her belief that the symbol is associated with white supremacy and racism and that it is something she does not want to be affiliated with.

Commissioner Standish stated he was not aware of the “thin blue line” flag until the matter was brought to the Board’s attention last year. He was hopeful that the PBA would recognize the concerns and voluntarily change their logo. He stated he is not in favor of litigation. Commissioner Standish opined that the resolution is rather vague and would benefit from additional review and clarity.

Commissioner Lee stated his belief that the people who have come forward in opposition to the symbol, have also stated their appreciation and respect for the police officers. On the other hand, those who support the police are not sensitive to concerns expressed by people of color. Mr. Lee stated it’s a fact that for generations people of color have experienced discrimination, and it can’t be ignored that some of the discrimination is tied to law enforcement. He expressed his strong feeling that it is a complicated but important issue that needs to be addressed.

Commissioner Cobb reiterated that the Board, the township and the police department have been unequivocal in their condemnation of hatred, bigotry and racism. He opined that the actions taken by the Board so far have only made the situation worse.

Vote on the motion 0-6. The motion did not pass.

Mr. Standish, Chairman of the Community Development Committee, reported:

Motion (Standish-Maxwell) vote 6-0, to appoint Al Comly, Jr. to a new, three-year term of service as a member of the Springfield Township Historical Commission. Mr. Comly’s new term of service shall expire December 31, 2025.

Mr. Standish announced that Scott Kreilick would be retiring as a member of the Historical Commission effective 12/31/22. Mr. Standish thanked Mr. Kreilick for his service.

Motion (Standish-Ratsavong) vote 6-0, to appoint Heather Snyder-Killinger to a new, three-year term of service as a member of the Springfield Township Historical Commission. Ms. Snyder-Killinger's term of service shall expire December 31, 2025.

Finally, Mr. Standish announced that there is a vacancy as an alternate member of the historical commission. Alternate members attend and participate in all meetings of the commission as a non-voting member. Any resident who is interested in serving as an alternate member of the historical commission was encouraged to submit a letter of interest to Township Manager

Mr. Wilson, Chairman of Environmental Resources Committee, reported

Mr. Wilson announced that during the month of November 2022, Springfield Township residents recycled 203.1 tons of material with a householder participation rate of 67.3%. The net cost for the month was \$28,596.97. Mr. Wilson noted that there were two holidays in November that negatively impacted the householder participation rate.

Mr. Wilson reported for Mr. Graham, Chairman of Cultural Resources Committee:

Motion (Wilson-Ratsavong) vote 6-0 to re-appoint Renee Brooks and Adam Hess to new, three-year terms of service as members of the Springfield Township Library Advisory Committee. The new, three year terms of service shall expire December 31, 2025.

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

Motion (Maxwell-Wilson) vote 6-0, to adopt Resolution No. 1586 authorizing an application to the Pennsylvania Small Water & Sewer Grant Program in the amount of \$404,562 for Phase II of the Terminal Avenue Storm Sewer Improvement Project. Mr. Maxwell noted that it is the Township's intention to construct a new storm sewer system on Terminal Avenue, from its intersection with Montgomery Avenue to Yeakel Avenue. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$475,955 and is intended to improve stormwater capture and conveyance, and reduce public and private property flooding in the Erdenheim section of the Township.

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

Motion (Cobb-Ratsavong) vote 6-0, to approve the November check reconciliation in the amount of \$597,728.96, and the December bill listing in the amount of \$649,687.03.

Motion (Cobb-Wilson) vote 6-0, to adopt Resolution No. 1587 authorizing the Township Manager to close an obsolete bank account with Citizens Bank having a present balance of \$4.26. Mr. Cobb explained that the subject bank account was established as a sinking

fund for a capital loan that was issued in the amount of \$550,000 in 2010, and that the loan was paid off in 2020.

Motion (Cobb-Ratsavong) vote 6-0, to authorize membership in the Pennsylvania Local Government Investment Trust (PLGIT) as a single depository for endowment funds to benefit the Free Library of Springfield Township. Mr. Cobb noted that the funds are presently held in nine separate Certificates of Deposit (CD) at three different banks. The principle amount of each CD ranges from \$1,000 to \$30,000, and combining the sums for investment purposes will yield higher interest returns.

Motion (Cobb-Ratsavong) vote 6-0, I move that the Board of Commissioners authorize an increase to the hourly rates and quarterly retainer charged by the Township Solicitor as follows:

Regular Municipal Rates: From \$165 to \$180/hour

Litigation Rates: From \$175 to \$190/hour

Legal Retainer: From \$7,500 to \$8,500/quarter

The proposed rates will become effective beginning January 1, 2023.

Mr. Cobb announced that the 2023 agency meeting schedule will remain the same as the 2022 meeting schedule of the Board of Commissioners and Township agencies. The Board of Commissioners will continue to meet each month on the second Wednesday at 7:30 PM, and on the Monday preceding the second Wednesday at 7:00 PM.

Mr. Cobb announced that the Springfield Township Zoning Hearing Board will meet on Monday, December 19, 2022 at 7:00 PM at the Springfield Township Building. Mr. Cobb summarized the Zoning Hearing Board Agenda and announced that copies of all applications are on file in the Code Enforcement Office and may be viewed during normal business hours.

Motion (Cobb-Standish) vote 6-0, to authorize the Office of the Township Solicitor to attend all future meetings of the Zoning Hearing Board in order to represent the interests of the Board of Commissioners in opposition to the petition filed by Robert Orsher, 8209 Ardmore Avenue. Mr. Orsher is requesting two variances to reduce the minimum and aggregate side yard setbacks.

Motion (Cobb-Ratsavong) vote 6-0, to reappoint Ed Fox to a new, three-year term of service as a member of the Springfield Township Zoning Hearing Board. Mr. Fox's new term of service shall expire December 31, 2025.

Mr. Cobb noted that Mr. Fox is the Chairman of the Zoning Hearing Board. Mr. Fox always puts applicants at ease when they appear before the Zoning Hearing Board. Mr. Cobb stated that Mr. Fox is an exemplary representative for the Township.

Ms. Ratsavong, Chairwoman of Parks and Recreational Resources Committee, reported:

Motion (Ratsavong-Wilson) vote 6-0, to authorize the creation of an ad hoc committee to be known as the Recreation Center Advisory Committee. The purpose of the committee is to assist the Township with the creation of a master plan to accommodate current and future programs and activities held at the recreation center. In conjunction with the creation of the committee, the Board of Commissioners previously met with the following residents who shall serve on the committee: (1) Joy Bergey, Flourtown, (2) Sarah LoGiudice, Erdenheim, (3) Edward Morris, III, Wyndmoor, (4) Jay Overcash, Wyndmoor, (5) Arthur Walters, Wyndmoor, and (6) Beth Zenuk, Wyndmoor.

Motion (Ratsavong-Cobb) vote 6-0, to authorize the Springfield Little League Baseball organization to construct a 4,900 square foot pole barn at Bysher Fields in Flourtown. The building will replace two existing outdoor batting cages that are in poor condition, and will be utilized as an indoor practice facility for the little league baseball and softball programs. Approval to construct the facility is conditioned upon the little league securing all necessary construction permits, the installation of stormwater management facilities in a form satisfactory to the Township Engineer, and an emergency access route that shall be approved by the fire marshal. In addition, prior to occupancy of the building, the little league shall enter into an agreement with the Township to memorialize the hours of operation and other details that may be necessary to minimize any impacts on the adjacent neighborhood.

Ms. Ratsavong wished to thank the Wyndmoor Hose Company for coordinating and hosting a holiday tree lighting ceremony at the fire house property, and to thank the township residents who have participated in the Township's Holiday Lights competition via social media.

Mr. Lee opened the meeting to public comment.

Elizabeth Wallace, Wyndmoor, took hope with the discussions tonight regarding the PBA symbol. She opined that litigation does not solve social issues.

Motion (Wilson-Standish) to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Taylor
Manager/Secretary