

PENN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
100 Municipal Building Road
Duncannon, PA 17020-1100

Henry A. Holman, Jr., Chairman

Randy Plummer, Vice-Chairman

Lucinda (CeCe) Novinger, Supervisor

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 21, 2008

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The Penn Township Board of Supervisors (PTS) met on Tuesday, October 21, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building to discuss fire company funding requests. Chairman Henry Holman, Jr., Vice-Chairman Randy Plummer, and Supervisor CeCe Novinger were in attendance. Other personnel present were Helen Klinepeter (Secretary) and Susan Long (Treasurer). The meeting was recorded to aid in the preparation of the minutes. A list of visitors is on file in the Township office.

OPENING REMARKS

Chairman Holman stated that the fire study, like so many other studies, provided recommendations but no funding to fulfill the recommendations. He noted that he has heard from Township residents that the idea to levy a fire tax is coming from the PTS. He asked that the record make clear that the idea of a levy of a fire tax comes from the fire companies, not the PTS. He offered his concern that some property owners could pay between \$2,500 and \$3,000 if a fire tax is levied.

Duncannon/Perdix Fire Company Position

Jodi Rissinger noted that this was the third meeting to be held on the fire companies' request for additional funding. She stressed that the fire companies have been asking for the equivalent of a one-mill fire tax. She reported that Perdix Fire Company has had \$25,000 more in expenses than revenue to-date this year. She noted that, as of September 30th, there was \$77,000 remaining in the Township's police budget. She asked if that money would be used to increase the donation for emergency services, since the Township only has one part-time police officer. Ms. Rissinger also stated that donations to the fire companies have not increased in accordance with the increase in the Local Services Tax revenue. Ms. Rissinger reported that fundraising revenue is down, as is volunteerism. She noted that the Township's younger residents are used to paying for a fire tax in their previous municipalities, and so do not donate because they think the Township also has a fire tax.

Byron Worner stated that the fire companies cannot continue to operate they way are and still make ends meet, and that the situation is bad. He expressed his concern that the PTS thinks the fire companies spend their money on "bells and whistles" and don't have a proper perspective on the amount of money the fire companies need to do their jobs. He invited the PTS to visit the Duncannon firehouse, look at the equipment, and examine the financial records. He also noted the fire study suggestion that the Township should own the fire trucks, offering that owning a fire truck is no different than owning a dump truck. He stated that the fire companies want to work with the PTS, but the PTS hasn't been working with them.

Mr. Worner read from a court opinion offering that an advisory referendum is illegal. He stated that the fire companies did not want a one-mill tax right from the beginning; they had asked for a ½-mill tax to start, which would then be raised gradually. He stated that, if a fire tax was enacted, the Township could lower its real estate tax.

Mr. Worner suggested the formation of a fire board, made up of representatives from Wheatfield and Penn townships and Duncannon Borough. The fire board would collect each municipality's pro-rated share and would distribute the funds.

PTS's Position

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Chairman Holman noted that the deadline for a fire tax referendum was August 21, 2008 and that it would not appear on the November ballot. The PTS will pursue a future referendum because it believes that levy of a fire tax should be up to the voters. Chairman Holman added that it is the responsibility of the fire companies to inform the public why a fire tax is needed. He felt that it would be better to levy a fire tax instead of raising real estate taxes. The fire tax would be collected by the Township's tax collector and forwarded to the PTS, who would disburse it to the fire companies. An annual audit of the disbursements, along with fire company expenditures, would be conducted.

Chairman Holman stated that the Township, like the fire companies, is having a hard time making ends meet, and that taxes would have to be raised in meet the fire companies' request. He noted that the PTS will be "tightening its belts" to hold the line on expenses.

Ms. Novinger offered her opinion that a fire tax was unfair, in that it was only levied on property owners, and stated that it would be better if all residents shared equally in the cost.

Chairman Holman reminded Mr. Worner that the deadline for Duncannon Fire Company to renew its contract was December 10, 2008.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to be conducted, and upon a Holman/Novinger motion, the PTS voted to adjourn at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan E. Long
Recording Secretary