

**December 10, 2024**

The regular meeting of the Ligonier Township Supervisors was held Tuesday, December 10, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building with Chairman Dan Resenic presiding.

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

**Others Present:** Township Manager Michael Strelic, Solicitor Dan Hudock, Chief of Police Michael Matronics, and Finance Officer Bethany Caldwell.

Mr. Resenic read aloud a statement regarding the Township Supervisors' loss of an opportunity to vote for the Township resident appointment to the commission for 2025 during today's Ligonier Valley Police Commission meeting.

### **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

**Scott Gongaware** – Noted that Mr Resnic did participate in the vote and did not lose his opportunity to vote. He clarified the LVPD Charter authorizes the commission to vote on the Township resident appointment, while the Township makes candidate recommendations.

**Shawn Knepper** – read a letter from the LVPD Union regarding their opposition to dismantling the regional department and urged the board to pass a code of ethics.

**Greg Sullenberger** – is a retired state trooper and commented on the differences between state and local police coverages and gave several examples of why he feels local coverage is better for the community.

**Donald Gilbert** – expressed support to expand the School Resource Officer program.

**Jean Case** – expressed support of local police coverage.

**Christiana Show** – asked Mr. Resenic to clarify his previous statement.

**Mark Lesniewski** – expressed support of local police coverage

**Dan Stevens** – referenced past feasibility studies related to the regional police department and suggested asking other municipalities to join.

**Barb Nalle** – Reminded residents that the Township completed a joint comprehensive plan several years ago and the regional police department was one of the most beneficial things that came out of this plan. She asked the board to consider the health and welfare of their residents.

**Ron Derk** – retired from the military and is a volunteer fire fighter that works alongside the police. He thanked the officers for their service.

### **COMMENTS FROM THE SUPERVISORS**

**Supervisor Matson** – would like to know how many people want to keep the regional police versus going back to Township police.

**Supervisor Ross** – no comment.

**Supervisor Beaufort** – thanked the public for coming, it is good for the public to know what is going on. We can talk about the police budget numbers – for the past 6 years the regional department’s budget has been split 70% (township) and 30% (borough). For the past 5 years the budget was flat. Last year we had to raise the budget, the Township pays \$715k but the budget hasn’t gone up that much considering how much inflation there’s been. In the past we couldn’t retain officers.

**Supervisor Verna** – Reviewed cost saving and revenue generating measures taken by the regional police department while continuing to expand and improve service with an essentially flat budget.

**Supervisor Resenic** – Expressed his support of the police, noting that he supports the joint police department, financially it is the best system and he will not vote to disband the department.

### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**A motion** was made by Scott Matson and seconded by Erik Ross to approve the minutes from the November 26, 2024 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

The Township has received several letters of interest in the vacancies on various boards/committees.

### **REPORTS:**

#### **MANAGER**

Mr. Strelac reported there was a power outage on Thanksgiving and a surge damaged the municipal building. He will be filing an insurance claim but does not expect it to cover 100% of the associated expenses.

Supervisor Beaufort said the generator should be tested once a month and noted this could’ve been a lot worse if the lines were frozen.

Supervisor Ross advised staff to check with Scott Electric for grants.

**A motion** was made by John Beaufort and seconded by Scott Matson to pursue getting a permanent generator that is hooked up to the building. Motion carried unanimously.

**SOLICITOR**

Mr. Hudock reported there has been no response regarding the Cherokee Lane code complaint.

**POLICE**

Chief Matrunics presented his monthly report.

**TREASURER**

Supervisor Verna read the fund balances as of November 30, 2024:

<b>Fund Balances (month end)</b>	<b>November</b>
General Fund	\$ 677,893
General Fund Reserves	\$1,321,968
Liquid Fuels Tax Fund	\$ 242,992
Capital Fund Reserves	\$ 44,447
Ligonier Beach Park Fund	\$ 113,225
Developer's Fund*	\$ 19,959
*Escrow	\$ 15,250
*Mill Creek Memorial Park	\$ 1,209
*Ligonier Trail	\$ 2,500
*Community Garden	\$ 1,000
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>\$2,420,484</b>

**BILLS PAYABLE**

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

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**2024-R-12 LVPD Code of Conduct Charter Amendment**

A motion was made by John Beaufort and seconded by Stephanie Verna to approve Resolution 2024-R-12, LVPD Code of Conduct Charter Amendment. A roll call vote was taken. Supervisors Beaufort and Verna voted aye, Supervisors Matson, Ross, Resenic voted nay. Motion failed 3:2.

**107 Coyote Lane Code Violation**

The manager reported the code enforcement officer recommended holding until the spring. No action was taken by the board.

**2025 Budget:**

Supervisor Verna went over the budget’s highlights and reminded the Supervisors that we need to also focus on the Township’s budget where we continue to see increases in our personnel costs, service contracts, materials and equipment costs. We have had the benefit of ARPA funds in the past two years to offset these increased costs.

**2024-R-20 2025 Real Estate Tax Rate**

A motion was made by Erik Ross and seconded by Scott Matson to approve 2024-R-20, 2025 Real Estate Tax Rate. Motion carried unanimously.

### **2024-R-21 2025 Fee Schedule**

**A motion** was made by Scott Matson and seconded by Erik Ross to approve 2024-R-21, 2025 Fee Schedule. Motion carried unanimously.

### **2024-R-22 2025 Budget Adoption Resolution**

**A motion** was made by Erik Ross and seconded by Scott Matson to approve 2024-R-22, 2025 Budget Adoption. Motion carried unanimously.

### **2024-O-06 Burning Ordinance Amendment**

This ordinance amendment closes some loop holes in the burning ordinance and was advertised.

**A motion** was made by John Beaufort and seconded by Stephanie Verna to approve 2024-O-06, Burning Ordinance Amendment. Motion carried unanimously.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Resolution 2024-R-23 Trail Study Signatory Update**

This resolution changes the signatory from the former Board Chair to the Township Manager for the DCNR Trail Study grant.

**A motion** was made by Erik Ross and seconded by John Beaufort to approve 2024-R-23, Trail Study Signatory Update. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **Next Meeting Date**

Per the second-class township code, the Township's organizational meeting must be held on the first Monday next month (January 6). Supervisor Beaufort suggested setting the meeting time at 7 p.m. so that the public can attend.

**A motion** was made by John Beaufort and seconded by Stephanie Verna to set the Township's Organizational meeting time at 7 p.m. on Monday, January 6. Motion carried unanimously.

With no further pressing business to attend to for the remainder of the year, Mr. Strelac asked the Board if they still wished to meet on their regularly scheduled meeting, Monday, December 23, 2024.

**A motion** was made by Scott Matson and seconded by John Beaufort to cancel the December 24, 2024 Township meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **Financial Feasibility & Responsibility of LVPD versus Township Police Department**

Mr. Resenic stated he has concerns about the new building offer. If the costs exceed the budget, the Township must pay 80% of that overrun.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

There was no executive session.

### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

**Dan Stevens** – stated the “gift horse” has come around for a third time and noted two supervisors are up for election next year.

**Jenny Bullock** – thanked the police department and said they are one of the reasons why they moved to this neighborhood.

**Ryan Hall** – thanked Supervisor Verna for her service and support.

**Judy Ebberts** – as a resident and volunteer fire fighter, expressed extreme displeasure with some elected officials.

**Patrick Cromel** – commented on the township’s financial support of its volunteer fire departments.

**Joe Vella** – expressed support of the SRO program.

**Angela Moffat** – expressed support of the local regional police department.

**Matthew Springer** – shared a personal story that highlighted the benefits of having a local police department that knows their residents and community.

**Greg Sullenberger** – commented on the hostile environment and noted Mr. Ross didn’t provide any comments nor did he address the residents. He listed multiple reasons the police should have a new building and stressed it should be closer to the schools.

**Supervisor Resenic** – asked Mr. Sullenberger if he would coordinate a meeting with Mr. Strelac, the mayor, and his benefactor to discuss this plan in more detail.

**Scott Gongaware** – noted the LVPD commission has been trying to improve its charter and asked Supervisor Resenic why he has voted to approve a code of ethics amendment as an LVPD Commissioner, but voted against it as a Township Supervisor.

**Shawn Knepper** – thanked the board for their public declaration and commitment to the shared mission of ensuring a safe and secure community for all residents. He questioned the board’s fiduciary responsibilities and any conflict resulting from a Supervisor taking legal action against the police department and certain officers.

**Dave Bridge** – noted the Volunteer Fire Departments and their struggle to recruit new members has been an ongoing topic of discussion at the township meetings.

**Michael Vernon** – Spoke about his involvement in a search for suitable properties for a new police station. He said there were a lot of rumors and misinformation about the proposal.

#### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM THE SUPERVISORS**

**Supervisor Matson** – no comment.

**Supervisor Ross** – no comment.

**Supervisor Verna** – Asked for transparency and numbers on paper related to the proposed new police station. She asked that the information about the benefits of a new station and financial arrangement be presented to the commission and funding municipalities. She suggested that we can get more done for the community if we work together and evaluate the new police station proposal based on the current proposal and information.

**Supervisor Beaufort** – thanked everyone for coming. Please take a look at the budgets. Santa is coming to the fire departments. Merry Christmas!

**Supervisor Resenic** – thanked everyone for coming.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

There being no further business before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bethany Caldwell  
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer