

The stated meeting of the Committee of the Whole of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held as a Zoom webinar and teleconference on Thursday, October 8, 2020 with Vice President Hecker presiding.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 7:48 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Commissioners THOMPSON, BRODSKY, BOLE, CARSWELL, ROTHMAN, VAUGHN, MYERS, BOWMAN, DiPLACIDO, WINEGRAD, VAHEY, SCHREIBER, HECKER, SPIEGELMAN  
Excused: ZAPPONE

**PRESENTATIONS:**

Presentation on the Public Facing Agenda System:

Manager Manfredi said this is a new agenda system that is user-friendly for residents who can sign up with their email addresses to search for information on public meetings; get notices of when agendas are posted and includes a link to videos of the meetings. The plan is for the system to be launched in November.

Vice President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Bole asked if residents sign up for agendas and there is a change, would they receive the new information.

Manager Manfredi replied yes, residents will be notified by email of an agenda change.

Citizen Portal Presentation:

Manager Manfredi said part of the public participation policy includes administrative briefings to the public, and an information session will be held for residents on instructions on how to use the citizen portal, which will be located on Township's website as well as can be accessed by cellphone. This new citizen portal will also be launched in November.

Presentation of the citizen portal tool was provided showing examples of how residents can report a complaint or an issue within the Township. One example would be reporting a pothole on a specific street that would be submitted to the Public Works Department. If a resident has provided an email address, they will be notified that it was submitted and when it is resolved. A report can also be sent anonymously; however, the resident would not be notified.

There is also a backend to the portal system for staff to track how long the complaint was submitted until it is resolved as well as to build a database on the Township's service to the community, and any complaints will be submitted to the appropriate Township department. Testing will first be done in November and then the Board will be informed as to when it will be fully launched and then made available for the public, and there will be an instructional video posted on Township's TV channel.

Vice President Hecker questioned whether this tool could be accessed through an app.

Mr. Vasserman replied it is not an app. It is web-based using any browser on the cellphone.

Manager Manfredi added that there is more functionality using a web-based program, so we did not develop an app.

Commissioner Carswell questioned whether there will be a link on Township's website such as the Home page where it could be easily accessed.

Mr. Vasserman replied currently on the Township's website there is a Request for Service tab on the top of the Home page and this tool would replace it, so it will be easy to find on the website.

Commissioner Carswell asked, for example, if there is a report of a pothole by a resident, would other residents see that report or will that only be seen internally.

Mr. Vasserman replied for any issue that is public facing such as a pothole, residents would be able to see the category, the report date, brief details, status, comments from others and a photo.

Commissioner Vaughn asked, for example, if a neighbor reports on another neighbor about a code issue, would the homeowner know who reported them?

Mr. Vasserman replied name, email address and phone number are not public facing. It would only be seen by those who are involved with the backend of the system.

Commissioner Vaughn questioned whether residents could submit general issues such as a town-watch matter that would involve the police department.

Manager Manfredi replied anything received from a resident that may involve the police is referred to the police department for proper vetting. The police department has its own website, although the best way to reach them is to call the radio room – non-emergency number. However, if there was a town-watch matter, it could be reported through this system and then forwarded to the police.

Commissioner Thompson asked about the possibility for Commissioners to opt-in to receive notifications of reports submitted by residents on certain types of issues.

Manager Manfredi replied yes, there is room on the backend for report generation or notifications and can be designed for Commissioners to opt-in on certain reports.

Commissioner Thompson asked for the timeframe for archiving reports as well as tracking of trends.

Mr. Vasserman replied the backend will be a spreadsheet of historical data, which over time trends could be tracked.

Commissioner DiPlacido commented that he would not want to be notified every time there is a report; however, he would want to be notified about a concentrated problem area so he can address it.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY:**

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about the amount of public speaking time on agenda items and that no committee meetings have been held, also about the Salem Baptist project.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Item BOC-01-111220 – CDBG HOME Rehabilitation Program and Budget Discussion:

Vice President Hecker said following discussion, the Board will make a decision about the direction of the agenda item as to whether it will be remanded back to committee for additional discussion; move it forward to the full Board meeting next month for review and vote or some other course of action recommended by a member of the Board.

Manager Manfredi said this item is listed on the agenda because previously there was a lot of discussion by the Board on several options on how these funds should be spent and the Board may consider what action to take.

Commissioner Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Winegrad to refer agenda Item BOC-01-111220 to the Finance Committee for further discussion.

Commissioner Myers agreed that this matter should go to the Finance Committee as they are the most familiar with it, so she supports the motion.

Commissioner Bowman questioned whether there is a time constraint on spending the funds.

Commissioner Vahey replied the Board voted in favor of waiver extending the deadline to June 2021.

Manager Manfredi added that approval has been granted for the extension.

Commissioner Bowman agreed to send it back to Finance Committee for further discussion.

Commissioner Schreiber also agreed to send it back to Finance Committee for further discussion.

Commissioner Bole commented that during previous discussion by the Board, there was a general sense that it needed to be revisited, so is the matter being reset and what exactly will be discussed by the Finance Committee?

Commissioner Vahey replied the Board did pass a budget because, at that time, we were required to do so; however, it was noted that it was a placeholder and not necessarily final and could be amended and that further discussion would be needed on how to appropriate funds.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item PW-01-111220 – Discuss and consider the Paper Recycling Agreement with Newman & Company, Inc.

Mr. Mark Maxwell, Superintendent of Refuse, said a three-year agreement between the Township and Newman Company will be expiring soon and there has been a long-term prosperous and professional relationship with the Newman family. Abington Township is the only municipality in Montgomery County that separates paper from comingle and the Newman Company pays the Township a considerable amount for its paper, so he recommended extending the agreement as it is in the best interest of the Township, otherwise the Township would have pay to get rid of its paper and lose approximately \$95,000-\$120,000 of income.

Vice President Hecker clarified that if the agreement is not renewed, the Township would lose revenue of approximately \$100,000 as well as there would be additional expense that would create more financial pressure on the budget. Is that correct?

Mr. Maxwell replied that is correct.

Commissioner Vahey questioned whether there would be any benefit to combine paper with comingle as other municipalities do.

Mr. Maxwell replied he does not know why other municipalities made the decision to single stream. The Township has a commodity that the Newman Company is looking for and that is clean paper. Three trucks pick up the paper, dump it into Newman's trailers and they haul it, and that results in savings of vehicle maintenance and in salaries of employees as they do not need to leave the Township.

Ms. Erkert added that staff from other municipalities that single stream have mentioned that Mr. Micciolo made the right decision many years ago to stay the course as it does pay to separate paper from comingle recycling.

Commissioner Vaughn said if the paper is being recycled into something else, she does not see the point in making a change.

Mr. Maxwell replied the Township provides Newman with large quantities of clean paper that is recycled into paperboard sheets and/or rolls that is used for cereal boxes, etc.

Commissioner DiPlacido thanked Mr. Maxwell and gave his full support.

Commissioner Rothman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Vaughn to move Item PW-01-111220 to the agenda of the Board of Commissioners meeting in November.

MOTION was ADOPTED 14-0.

Item PW-01-100820 – Consider and discuss the extension of an agreement for recycling services currently being provided by J.P. Mascaro & Sons through the Montgomery County Consortium of Communities and alternatives:

Vice President Hecker noted that the Board approved an extension and agreed to discuss it further.

Manager Manfredi said by granting extension, it provides the consortium time to do an analysis to consider various options, and the Board may wish to consider whether this should come back before the Committee of the Whole to discuss the results or send it to a specific committee for further discussion.

Mr. Maxwell said the consortium applied for Technical Assistance Grants, and it was approved, and Abington Township's part of the grant will cover the feasibility study of building a MRF (materials recovery facility). Staff of Upper Dublin Township will be reviewing efficiency of existing facility and Springfield Township's technical assistance grant will be used to analyze collection for improvement. Staff from another municipality will review RFP (Request for Proposal) and another municipality will use the grant for educational outreach programs.

Ms. Erkert added that we will also review the trash transfer station as there are grants available to retrofit existing buildings. The consortium's goal will be to review how to best serve all the communities over the next 20 years.

Manager Manfredi suggested tentatively scheduling this matter as an agenda item under unfinished business in January for the Committee of the Whole to consider various alternatives and review results of analysis.

Commissioner Rothman, Chairman of Public Works Committee, gave his full support.

Consensus of Committee of the Whole was to further review and consider this matter at its meeting in January 2021.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Minutes Secretary