

The stated meeting of the Public Safety Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, May 31, 2017 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Schreiber presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:20 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioners SCHREIBER, DiPLACIDO, SPIEGELMAN

Excused: BOWMAN, KALINOSKI

Township Manager MANFREDI

Township Solicitor CLARKE

Fire Marshal CLARK

Chief of Police LIVINGOOD

Traffic Safety Officer FREED

Also Present: Commissioners LUKER, KLINE, HECKER, FARREN, MYERS, ROTHMAN, SANCHEZ, ZAPPONE, GILLESPIE

MINUTES: Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve the minutes of the May 3, 2017 Public Safety.

MOTION was ADOPTED 3-0.

Rich Garrett, Second Alarmers, announced that all residents will be receiving a postcard about our annual subscription drive to electronically sign up or they can send a check by mail.

Police Department Report:

Chief Livingood reported that on May 12, 2017, the Montgomery County District Attorney released the Montgomery County Investigating Grand Jury Report on the "The Opioid Epidemic." A link has been distributed to this 82-page report and it is also available for downloading from the D.A.'s website.

In response to this epidemic, the District Attorney has issued an overdose response and investigation protocol and Abington Police have developed a policy following the D.A.'s guidelines that has been placed into effect immediately and the department has made dealing with this crisis a number one priority for our Police Department.

One strategy is the Drug Education and Addiction Program (DEAP), which is a pilot collaborative effort between Lower Providence Police Department and the D.A.'s Office aimed at identifying young offenders ages 18-26, who have been arrested for drug possession and low level related crimes with the goal of preventing addicts. Lt. Warner has been working with the Lower Providence Police Department and the D.A.'s Office to determine whether it is appropriate for Abington Police to get involved with that program as well.

Tonight's agenda includes a promotion of Jennifer Doyle to Sergeant and that it will take the department to 11 sergeants and a total of 19 supervisors. Also on the agenda are motions to hire two new police officers, which will put the department at our allotted number of 92.

Traffic Safety Officer Freed reminded everyone that June begins the Traffic Safety Blitz and signs are available. Also, schools will be letting out in June and he reminded motorists to drive safely. Also, a new traffic safety program has begun in social media indicating each week where we will be concentrating our traffic safety enforcement activities.

First Conditional Appointment- Probationary Police Officer

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to appoint candidate Lee Yochum from the Certified Civil Service Eligibility List to the position of Probationary Police Officer provided he successfully completes the Background, Physical and Psychological tests and all entry requirements of the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission for Act 120 Training. Appointment will be effective July 5, 2017.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff. There were none.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 3-0.

Second Conditional Appointment – Probationary Police Officer

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner DiPlacido to appoint candidate Ryan Hasara from the Certified Civil Service Eligibility List to the position of Probationary Police Officer provided he successfully completes the Background, Physical and Psychological tests and all entry requirements of the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission for Act 120 Training. Appointment will be effective July 5, 2017.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff. There were none.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 3-0.

Conditional Promotion to the Rank of Sergeant

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to promote Officer Jennifer Doyle to the rank of Probationary Sergeant effective June 9, 2017 providing she successfully completes the remaining portions of the promotional process.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any comments from Commissioners or staff. There were none.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 3-0.

Ordinance No. 2139 – Allowing Earned Income Tax Credits up to \$1,000 Per Year be Applied to Local Taxes of Firefighters

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner DiPlacido to approve Ordinance No. 2139 and authorize the Solicitor to advertise.

Solicitor Clarke said this ordinance allows the Township to create a volunteer credit program that allows those who volunteer as a firefighter or EMS in the Township to receive a tax credit on earned income tax based on criteria that will be established by a variety of factors. Requirements of the ordinance are that it needs to be advertised for 30 days, and once the ordinance is passed, Township officials will meet with Fire Chiefs and officials of EMS to develop criteria that will be used to determine whether or not someone is eligible for the credit and on a subsequent date that criteria will be drafted into a resolution that will be passed by the Board.

The amount listed in the ordinance for tax credit is the amount that is permitted by law. This comes from legislation last year passed by the State and they have not written all of the guidelines for administration of this tax credit.

Commissioner Schreiber said it is \$1,000 maximum by law, and if there are two people in the same household who are both volunteers, would it be \$1,000 each or \$1,000 per household?

Solicitor Clarke replied if they are both volunteers each paying earned income tax then both qualifies.

Commissioner Schreiber asked if the fire companies have criteria for liability can we use criteria that have already been established or do we need to set up new eligibility criteria.

Solicitor Clarke replied we are required to work with the Fire Chiefs and EMS officials to come up with criteria.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Myers referred to the draft ordinance where it says, "it provides municipalities with the option to offer a real estate or earned income tax credit," and how was the decision made that it would be earned income tax as opposed to real estate?

Solicitor Clarke replied it was previously discussed at a prior meeting about making it part of the EIT, so that is how the ordinance was drafted. There will be a significant amount of lag time between advertising and adoption, so the Board can decide to change it to include both if they so choose.

Commissioner Myers questioned whether this ordinance will affect in any way the LOSAP (Length of Service Program) for firefighters.

Solicitor Clarke replied he can not answer that question at this time, but will look into it.

Commissioner Myers said it is important as that program was established 10-15 years ago and there are criteria for that program and perhaps the same criteria could be used for this, but we want to do everything to protect that program. She is in favor of this new program, but does not want to rush into it and do it right the first time.

Solicitor Clarke said criteria needs to be established after adoption of the ordinance and then the criteria needs to be passed by resolution.

Commissioner Myers asked would the Fire Chiefs have a say as to whether it is earned income or real estate tax?

Solicitor Clarke replied no, that decision is made by the Board.

Commissioner Myers referring to draft ordinance that says "the tax credit will only be applicable to the earned income tax imposed by the Township," and would it be behoove the Township in any way to ask School District officials if they want to be part of it and their percentage be included.

Solicitor Clarke replied the legislation is written so that it can only be the Township's portion of EIT or property taxes.

Commissioner Kline questioned whether the motion is written correctly.

Solicitor Clarke replied it is simply a motion to authorize advertisement. By law, it needs to be advertised a minimum of 30 days. The suggestion is to advertise it and then the Board can vote on it in August. The motion should read to authorize Township Solicitor to advertise Ordinance No. 2139.

Commissioner Schreiber made a MOTION to AMEND the MOTION to authorize Township Solicitor to advertise Ordinance No. 2139, seconded by Commissioner DiPlacido.

Commissioner Kline requested that Township Manager and Finance Director to work with the Fire Chiefs or Fire Marshal's Office on how many firefighters would potentially qualify for the tax credit and what the fiscal impact would be for the Township. He fully understands that by not having a volunteer fire company, it would cost the Township a lot more; however, this could have a potential negative effect on the budget.

Commissioner Schreiber suggested also reviewing real estate tax credit vs. EIT tax credit.

Manager Manfredi replied we will look into both of those suggestions.

Commissioner Sanchez said we also need to know whether this would carry forward each year.

Commissioner Gillespie commented that the threshold would be much different between EIT and real estate tax credit. Also, she is in favor of this ordinance for our volunteer firefighters, who do a great job.

Solicitor Clarke replied it is 20% maximum of property taxes of the Township tax only.

Commissioner Kline said he spoke with Cheltenham Township Commissioner Sharkey, and there is some interest in coordinating efforts both from Abington and Cheltenham Townships about those who live in Abington and Cheltenham who volunteer in the Township they do not live in, and he asked that Township Manager or Township Solicitor contact Cheltenham Township's Manager or Solicitor to discuss coordinating efforts in regards to this ordinance.

Manager Manfredi replied that is one issue being discussed throughout the county as to how to handle the crossover and he will look into it.

Commissioner Schreiber said at this time it is only for Abington Township residents and if that was to be changed would it require re-advertising?

Solicitor Clarke replied that would be a substantial amendment that would require re-advertising.

Commissioner Luker questioned whether a public hearing will be needed at some point.

Solicitor Clarke replied yes, a public hearing will be needed to adopt the ordinance.

Commissioner Schreiber questioned the amount of EMS volunteers who live in the Township.

Mr. Garrett replied he does not know exactly how many volunteers live in the Township, but possibly 10-15.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION as AMENDED – PASSED 3-0.

Commissioner Schreiber asked for any general comments relating to Public Safety.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, requested that property addresses are listed in motions for traffic regulations.

Commissioner Schreiber replied it used to be done that way, but how the motions are listed now is normally what is done in most municipalities.

ADJOURNMENT: 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard J. Manfredi, Township Manager/Secretary

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