TOWNSHIP OF FALLS
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

ROLL CALL:

JEFFRY E. DENCE, CHAIRMAN	PRESENT
ERIN M. MULLEN, VICE-CHAIRPERSON	PRESENT
BRIAN M. GALLOWAY, SECRETARY	PRESENT
JEFFREY M. BORASKI, SUPERVISOR	ABSENT
JOHN W. PALMER, SUPERVISOR	PRESENT

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. with roll call and pledge to the flag. All Board members were present with the exception of Member Boraski. Also present were Township Manager John Shepherd, Township Solicitor Lauren Gallagher and Township Engineer Joe Jones. Department Heads were also in attendance.

ITEM # 1 EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Gallagher said the Board met prior to tonight's meeting to discuss matters of personnel and potential litigation.

ITEM # 2 PUBLIC COMMENT – FIVE MINUTE LIMIT PER PERSON FORTY-FIVE MINUTE MAXIMUM

No one signed in for Public Comment.

ITEM # 3 BUDGET WORKSHOP

Mr. Shepherd said during this meeting they will review the budget timeline and talk about the capital budget. Finance Director Betsey Reukauf said this is the second of three Budget Workshops. Mrs. Reukauf asked Board Members to schedule some time to meet with her and Mr. Shepherd to discuss the budget or ask questions. The proposed budget will be presented to the Board on November 24, 2025 and advertised for public inspection on November 25, 2025. The public inspection of the budget will be held from November 26, 2025 through December 16, 2025. The Board will plan to adopt the 2026 Budget at the Board meeting of December 16, 2025. The Board was provided with updated budget sheets which consist primarily of capital projects. Mr. Shepherd would like to review some of the highlights and projects. Some of these projects are carryovers. He has two goals in mind. One is to move as many budget line items as possible into operating if they are truly an operating line item versus a capital item. The second goal is to begin to determine a feasible annual capital budget going forward. Going forward, the capital budget should be consistent from year to year because our revenues are going to be relatively consistent as time goes on. They'll go up and down a little bit but if they have a consistent operating and capital budget and can plan for that, then we can make a decision where we are able to hopefully control tax increases, things of that nature, and also make sure we do everything from an operating and capital nature. Mr. Shepherd said this is the first year he will be trying to get an idea of what is a realistic number. As time goes on, everyone should agree on an annual target number. It can be reviewed every year but we are trying to come up with a number indicating this is the amount of money we have for all the departments to make our projects work. Mr. Shepherd said that was his other goal in doing the capital budget for 2026. Staff and department heads are in attendance tonight if any questions arise. The capital budget will continue to be developed and refined until the final budget meeting where the Board of Supervisors approve the tentative budget for advertising. The 2026 capital requests are listed by department. Starting with Parks and Recreation, Mr. Shepherd spoke about the Kirby Park project. He said it sounds like it may still be ongoing as the Police Department was interested in doing a project there. They were thinking about forming a 501c3; like a "Friends of Kirby Park" recreation organization to assist with that. Mr. Shepherd said he is not sure if there are plans to move forward with that. We probably need to go in and do some restoration work. The second line item for $55,000 is for renovation of the existing Kirby Park if the police project may not work from a standpoint of raising the money and having the 501c3, so that is something for the Board to consider. Chairman Dence said they did start a 501c3 for the Township for all fundraising so rather than the police starting their own, we have one that will deal with all the money that we raise in the Township. Mr. Shepherd and the Police Chief spoke about this. The police proposal may be slightly different to what Mr. Andrews was thinking. He was looking at renovating what is there and the police proposal was looking at some enhancements. The next recreation project is possible repair of the boat docks. We'll know once they're removed for the season if they need repair. The Penns Grant Park redevelopment was discussed and Member Mullen has been involved with the Safety Town component of that. This is to rehabilitate an existing neighborhood playground and expand it to include the Safety Town portion. This is a matter of funding. Mr. Shepherd and Mr. Andrews have spoken about applying for a state grant through the DCNR. If they do apply, DCNR would fund up to 50% of the construction cost. It is usually a 50/50 split. We probably won't find out about that until late summer or early fall and if we don't find out until then, this may be a 2027 construction. It is really up to the Board if you want to do this project and apply for the grant to see if we are successful or move it directly as a capital project. If you don't want to wait for the DCNR grant, there is another private grant source that potentially would fund $50,000 towards the Safety Town component of it. It sounded like this project was well received by the Board. Chairman Dence asked Mr. Shepherd to email him information on the Safety Town. Mr. Andrews said if you're familiar with Penns Grant, there are two separate playgrounds right now. One is for ages 2-5 and the other is for ages 5-12. The idea is to have Public Works pave the 2-5 year old area, add street lines and little buildings where they could walk and bike. We would have a component where we could do walking and biking safety. They have them up in Warminster and Warrington has one. Mr. Andrews will get some photos and examples of it. This would also be fenced in. If we do the playground on the other side that would be for ages 2-12, which is what we've been doing with our other playgrounds. Member Mullen asked about the source of funding. Mr. Shepherd said we could apply now as long as it's in by the end of December and they'd let you know fairly quickly about the funding. They want the funding spent within a year. Chairman Dence had a question about the tile system over the asphalt at the hockey rink. Mr. Andrews said in 2022, they put asphalt down at the rink. Since it was put in, the drainage has been very poor. Mr. Andrews spoke with Bensalem and they also had this issue. They assessed some drainage options by going in, drilling holes in the existing asphalt, removing it and redoing it. The tile system is called Deck. It is a hockey surface that you play on and that way we wouldn't have to rip out the existing asphalt. We could possibly add some drainage underneath. You don't have to worry about the aesthetics of that necessarily with the tile system. It is painted, has lines on it and is very durable. You can replace the tiles if they become worn out. Mr. Shepherd said some of the pool projects that are recommended are straightforward replacements of existing things. Moving on to Public Works, the $60K Mill and overlay project for East Tyburn Rd is a project that will be done by the Public Works staff as they have the capability to do that type of work. Some of the other projects that are planned you'll see towards the end of the Public Works budget are indicated for 2027. One is an asphalt roller and one is a sweeper. Mr. Shepherd is mentioning those to let the Board know that moving forward this year was too short of a time window but going forward, he will present the Board with a five-year capital budget. You're going to see a capital budget for every department with a five-year time frame. It will give you an idea of what's coming down the road in addition to the following year. Instead of seeing something like this, you're going to see it for all the departments and you're going to see it over a five-year window. That window will change and those projects will change, but it will give everyone an idea of what the departments are looking for in the future. That way you can start thinking about those projects, especially if there are some big-ticket items, at least you'll know they're coming. You will see that in next year's budget proposal. A lot of the Public Works expenditures are somewhat straightforward. Member Palmer asked about the vinyl sign machine. Mr. Arnao said they had an old one before they moved from the old building but as of now, they buy signs from the sign company. Member Palmer said he is asking because it is a real asset for the shop to have. Mr. Arnao said they are starting a sign maintenance program where all the signs in the Township are going to be redone every so many years. It has been about 15 years since they re-signed. This machine would give us the chance to make signs or if you have a sign knocked down during an accident and you need a quick replacement, this equipment will take care of that.

From the Fire Marshal's Office, there are a few carry-over projects in Fire including a communication shed, surveillance project and surveillance camera projects. We are recommending carrying those again in the event we can get those done this year.

From Administration, Mr. Shepherd has recommended moving the Traffic Impact Fee Study to 2027 as he would like to spend a little more time thinking about that program and seeing the value to Falls Township before moving forward with it. The baseball field funding needs to be looked at. In 2025, we funded $195K as a straight line item to make improvements at various baseball fields. Of that, $148K was spent so a lot of improvements were made. There is $77K remaining. The question is whether there is a need or desire from the Board to maintain some level of funding going into next year considering the improvements that have been made. If anyone needs additional information about improvements, Mr. Andrews can look at some things. Mr. Shepherd recommends holding off on the amphitheater project until 2027. He would like to spend a little more time thinking about it and if it makes sense for them to do it. It would need to be designed and then come up with the construction cost. In Administration, a lot of the costs are related to some ongoing grants for some traffic-signal improvements and things of that nature. Some items we have a match. For Code Enforcement, one of the projects was moved to operating because it's an operating cost. The other one is blight remediation. That is a project that we included this year which had a budget of $200K. Mr. Shepherd recommends $100K for 2026. It is a great idea that we are just getting up and running so he is not sure they are going to need $200K in 2026. It is good to have funding in the event we could utilize it. Member Mullen said on that line item, it was suggested to invite the County to give us some sort of presentation. There is some funding available from the County and there may be some properties that may qualify for County funding. The police don't have a lot of capital projects but Mr. Shepherd wants to bring to the Board's attention they do have one new vehicle for 2026. The Chief looked at his fleet and based on mileage there were some vehicles they were planning to replace but there isn't a need to replace those in 2026 based on just the condition of the cars and mileage. The next sheet is the 2026 Proposed Capital Projects. These are Township wide projects so sometimes this provides support for various projects that are proposed for 2026. The first project on that list is a mill and overlay program for 2026. It has been at least a few years since a traditional mill and overlay program has been done. Usually, you're not doing the curbs and the drains as those things last a lot longer than the asphalt does. The recommendation is to budget $1M for next year with engineering around $100K. Ultimately, every year we need a mill and overlay program because by the time we finish the mill and overlay program, you start over again. You are looking at 15 to 20 years or maybe 25 years on some municipal roads. Even if you use 20 years, if we did the math on Township roads, that's probably the amount of money we need to have a continual program. One million dollars may not be the exact number that is needed but for this year with a short time frame to put that together, Manager Shepherd believes that is a reasonable number. If the Board provided a little more funding, we do the roads and there is no doubt about that. Then going forward, we try to have a more uniform number on an annual basis for mill and overlay. Mr. Arnao's list of routes was almost $1.4M based on his rough estimate of what that cost would be. The next item is the full-depth road reconstruction of Willow Drive. This is a project that Mr. Jones has put together within the last year or so. He has a budget for this of over $4M. We broke this into four segments just to make it work a little bit better budget wise. This will be phase one of that program. Mr. Arnao has all the engineering in place for that. It is just a matter of moving forward with the bidding, awarding the bid then actually doing the construction. There are a handful of roads that still need full reconstruction and this is one of them. The next project is the South Olds Boulevard culvert. This is a more pressing project that we need to complete so we should try to accomplish it in the 2026 Budget. If we didn't think we could do all the projects in 2026 financially or if they weren't as pressing, we pushed them off for future years in a five-year plan if they fit within that time frame. Mr. Jones said PennDOT came out and inspected the bridge and we disagreed with PennDOT's assessment that it was an imminent problem but they rated it as a top rating for removal and replacement. Mr. Jones said we were waiting for grant opportunities. We felt we could address the flood plain at the golf course and try to combine the culvert replacement with some relief to the homes on Blough Road that are in the flood plain. That was the delay and they came out and saw some erosion on one of the head walls and said this was a problem. They saw some failure in the gutter so we rented barriers, shifted the traffic and put a weight limit on it. They said we had seven days to do that based on their rating of the bridge. Mr. Jones said after a long and strenuous process, we have concluded that is not likely that we would be eligible for the Green Infrastructure grant that we were pursuing, the 75/25 split. The next project on the list is MS4, the enhancement to Martins Creek. At the last meeting, we approved the additional engineering cost related to that change order for some additional work. Manager Shepherd said there is good potential that we can get Local Share Grant money for this project. The grant application is due the end of November. Manager Shepherd and Mr. Arnao will be meeting with the grant writer to see if they can make this work. The maximum grant amount is $1M. If the Board likes this as an opportunity, we should seriously consider applying for grant funds for this. If we're not successful, we can make a determination whether we want to move forward with Township funds. This will address where Martins Creek goes under the canal. If we apply for that grant, we probably need a Resolution at our last meeting in November and hopefully we'll be successful in getting that money. Chairman Dence asked about the culvert at the community park where Martin's Creek goes under the road. Mr. Jones said in a meeting to prioritize when he was asked where he thought the budget should go, he recommended that it could be a 2026 or 2027 project. It hasn't really changed much since the first time he looked at it. Plans are ready to go. They thought Public Works was going to do the work but that has changed and it will now go out to bid. Mr. Jones said they will monitor that over the next year. Mr. Shepherd said the other project for 2026 is the Community Dog Park turf enhancements. Mr. Shepherd spoke with staff and Mr. Arnao about this project and he's done some work on that to give us an idea of what we can do there from a turf enhancement standpoint. We've talked about running water there too. We will also talk to the grant writers about that project. If for some reason we aren't interested in the Safety Town Project with the $50K max private grant source, this is another good opportunity for that grant source. Part of the problem is that it is probably too successful of a dog park. It is very well used and it is getting beat up. Member Mullen asked about the mill and overlay program and if it would affect staffing or workload. Mr. Shepherd said this is on contract with Mr. Jones managing it. Mr. Jones said each year when we were doing reconstruction projects, we kept a certain amount of budget for mill and overlay roads where we thought they were needed. Each year they reconstructed, they did four or five roads and also did all of Fallsington Woods. We have done mill and overlays but it wasn't from communication with Public Works at the time. Mr. Shepherd said the only other question we have is the annual funding contributions. We just need the determination of whether the Board wants to maintain the $6K contribution for the Tour of Honor.

ITEM # 4 MANAGER COMMENT

There was no action on this agenda item.

ITEM # 5 BOARD COMMENT

There was no action on this agenda item.

Member Galloway moved to adjourn the meeting; Member Mullen seconded the motion; all board members were in favor. (4-0) The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

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Brian Galloway, Secretary