

HEMPFIELD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AND

HEMPFIELD AREA SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTORS

MEETING

JANUARY 29, 2020

A. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG:

The joint meeting between the Hempfield Township Board of Supervisors and the Hempfield Area School Board Directors was called to order at 7 p.m. by Chairman George Reese, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members Present: Mr. George Reese Mr. Doug Weimer
Mr. John Silvis Mr. Tom Logan
Mr. Rob Ritson

Staff Present: Mr. Scott Avolio Mrs. Denise Rosak
Mr. Jason Winters Mr. Aaron Siko
Mr. Patrick Karnash

School Board

Members Present: Dr. Tony Bompiani Dr. Scott Learn
Mr. Michael Alfery Mr. Paul Ward
Mrs. Diane Ciabattoni Mrs. Jennifer Bretz

School Board

Staff Present: Dr. Tammy Wolicki

Chairman George Reese commented as follows: “At this time we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for attending tonight’s meeting between the Supervisors and the School Board Directors. This meeting is an opportunity for the Township and the School District to come together to begin to discuss future growth and advancement of our community. Our goal is to focus on the potential for efficient and effective collaborations between our organizations, while representing our residents and our businesses. We hope to conclude tonight’s meeting with a shared excitement for the future for the growth of our community. Where the School District excels in educating our youth, we will continue to match their vigor in growing this Township. We look forward to this unique opportunity to collaborate and create a road map for our community with concentration and cooperation. We can create and achieve shared goals to make Hempfield a great place to live, learn, and call home.”

B. CITIZENS COMMENTS: (As Per Resolution #2012-24)

1. **Marian Sedlacko** – Mrs. Sedlacko of 655 DeGregory Drive, Greensburg, said that after talking to numerous people that no one wants higher taxes for a park, which is a luxury item. She stressed that if taxes keep being raised, it will hurt everyone. Mrs. Sedlacko asked that the funds be spent better and smarter.

2. **Mayor Chris Long** – Mayor Long of Youngwood Borough, accompanied by Scott Palmquist, President of Council, expressed his appreciation for the invitation to the joint meeting. The Mayor also acknowledged the numerous joint projects and great relationship with the Township over the years. In addition, he noted the facilities in the Borough like the Youngwood Park and Pool and the Youngwood Library which also benefits residents of the Township, not to mention the shared emergency calls with the Youngwood Volunteer Fire Department. In closing, Mayor Long thanked the Boards for the opportunity to speak and offered the continued assistance of Youngwood Borough.
3. **Dr. Tony Bompiani** – Dr. Bompiani, President of the Hempfield Area School Board, said that he was happy to see the turnout for the meeting this evening. In addition, he noted that it is always good to get together to have a joint meeting and open the line of communications between the School Board Directors and the Board of Supervisors, especially in an effort to save tax dollars for both entities. In closing, Dr. Bompiani acknowledged Representative Eric Nelson in the audience.

C. HEMPFIELD PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN PRESENTATION:

Mr. Siko advised that what the Township is looking at are two (2) parcels in the Township, which are located adjacent to the Hempfield Area High School property, for opportunities for recreational, leisure services. The results of surveys conducted through Mackin Engineers for the top five (5) ideas they would like to see developed were as follows:

1. Swimming and water play
2. Natural forests and meadows
3. Events and festivals
4. fitness (such as excersie and hiking)
5. organized fields and sports on a multi-use field

The results of the surveys for the top ten (10) ideas:

1. Hiking trails
2. Rock climbing wall
3. Picnic areas
4. Indoor/outdoor aquatic facilities
5. Sports fields
6. Water playgrounds/water parks/splash paths
7. Open fields (meadows and natural area and the greenspace)
8. Bike trails
9. Playgrounds
10. Adventure play areas (Currently not available in Westmoreland County)

He introduced Bob Genter of Mackin Engineers to present the proposed master plan with accompanying data to the Boards.

Mr. Bob Genter of Mackin Engineers presented the proposed master plan with accompanying data to the Boards. He noted that the location of the parcels in question is a fantastic opportunity to look at what the Township and School Board can do to complement each other. Programming, education, walking/linear exercises, obstacle courses, hiking trails, and parks and recreation are not just for the youth. The potential in considering shared uses would help minimize costs for both Boards. Mr. Genter asked the Board of Supervisors and the Hempfield Area School Board

Directors for some input, suggestions, or ideas for the parcels in order for him to understand what type of concept plans to develop.

Board of Supervisors and School Board Directors' Suggestions:

- Athletic offerings and accessibility for activities after school hours would be valuable.
- Additional accessways to and from the campus to address public safety concerns.
- In-door swimming pool
- Outdoor classrooms
- Greenspace
- Walking trails
- Picnic areas
- In-door/out-door sports

Supervisor Ritson commented that whenever the subject of parks is discussed, everybody is concerned about revenue; however, a long while back the Township implemented the Hempfield Parks & Rec Fund through the Community Foundation as an investment. Instead of the residential developers building tot lots, which were not ultimately being used as tot lots, instead they would contribute monies into the Fund. In addition, Supervisor Ritson advised that the Township started to seek and get sponsorships from the corporate community, a tax-deductible donation, all in an effort to be used for a project like this in lieu of direct taxation. Furthermore, Supervisor Ritson noted that the Recreation Director recently proposed that the Township look at 501C3 to access monies which are to be more liquid for a programmatic sense, such as the concert series, and things that the Township is trying to plan, all in an effort to stave off or not touch the general fund tax dollars. Supervisor Logan concurred with Supervisor Ritson in saying that the Township set aside a substantial amount of money with its Parks & Rec Fund that can be utilized to match grants for these types of project and that there is absolutely no intention to raise taxes for these projects. He also suggested establishing committees consisting of members appointed or from the School Board and Board of Supervisors. The committees he mentioned included athletic; legislative/broadband; and shared resources.

Supervisor Weimer commented as follows: "I believe that when the Township Board of Supervisors purchased that property, they definitely had the intent on building a large in-door facility there. And, I think that if you spend time on that property, I do understand that the land is rather conducive for something like that but it's not so conducive for ballfields and playgrounds. Although the idea of a lot of earth moving that could be done over there, I think that those types of things are already duplicated in the region – quite a few ballfields on the campus of the School District there. It's nice to hear that they are talking about opening up their facilities and keeping them open for the public that we both serve. That they keep in mind when they were expanding their gyms that they wanted to have full courts so that recreational opportunities can be taken advantage of indoors. And I think their buildings are spread out through the community. Whenever we are looking at places for people to walk and trails, I think this region is already has a rural setting. We have definitely some rural roads that are surrounding that so people that are going to hike out of Ft. Allen and I look at these maps, it's quite a venture to hike – I mean it is a hike because of the elevations that are there – to get to this property if they are looking for that type of outdoor activity there's plenty of space to do that in the region already. So, I'm not so sure that this property is one that needs to be had for consideration for development for recreation. I think that the Township does have some parks that are spread out in this area that being here at Swede Hill. We do maintain a property that doesn't belong to us. I am well aware that the county – it's a county property – but the Township is footing the bill for everything that's there. And I did ask at

one point for a comprehensive plan to be done for recreation and I think that possibly that should be considered before we move on to talking about opening up another location in this area. So, I have reservations. I've had reservations about putting recreation on this site. I certainly did fully explore it over the years that – since I've taken office about what could be done there. So, I'm not – I really have apprehensions for doing anything else with this site. And I think that we need to look at recreation as a whole.”

Supervisor Reese said that he is definitely for building a park at the property and not a huge building or a big facility. He said he supports the ideas of walking trails, ballfields, etc. in order to offer more recreational amenities to the Hempfield population located in the central area of the Township. In addition, Supervisor Reese said that he would like to work with the residents located in the area of the property to develop something that would be beneficial to all.

Supervisor Weimer commented as follows: “I, just again, want to say that I don't feel that we need to duplicate amenities that are already here in the central part of the Township – that is, that may not be in Hempfield Township. Yes, we are a great big community but I, myself, and my family avail ourselves to the amenities that are in the City of Greensburg.” He continued, “They do have a public pool outside and they have a large recreational space that is very near the center of our community as well, Lynch Field, that is surrounded by Hempfield just about. Also, in the City of Greensburg is the YMCA, with an indoor pool, and other indoor facilities there, as well, that many people that I know from Hempfield take advantage of. So, I know that we are not talking about, and I'm glad to hear, that we are not talking about a grandiose building –indoor facility on that property any longer, although it was the original intent, and I still state it's a property that's conducive for that but not one that I would support and I never have supported an indoor facility there. So, I would hate to see our Board of Supervisors move forward on wasting any grant funds on it or any tax dollars from our residents. So, I really think that we need to talk about exiting from this property and putting those efforts somewhere else. That concludes my comments.”

Supervisor Ritson responded that he disagrees with Supervisor Weimer.

Supervisor Reese said that Supervisor Weimer would rather our residents use other municipalities' facilities.

Supervisor Weimer responded that he'd rather see our residents use the amenities that are in our reach and that he does not want to duplicate things.

D. HEMPFIELD AREA SCHOOL BOARD UPDATES:

Superintendent Wolicki provided a brief overview of some of the recent initiatives that the School District is currently working on.

- Demographic study which looked at projections and future enrollments for the next five (5) to ten (10) years. This study greatly assists in creating an overview of the needs of the School District including building renovations/constructions, etc.

E. HEMPFIELD TOWNSHIP UPDATES:

Township Manager, Mr. Winters, highlighted the following projects:

- Continuing with the Township's Parks & Recreation master plan at North Hempfield Park and working on the master plan process with the Walden Courts and the park projects.

- Renovated the Mazeroski ballfield.
- Constructed an amphitheater which enables events such as the summer concert series and movies in the park.
- Renovated all of the pavilions
- In the works currently is the construction of a dog park, a new pavilion, and renovations of the upper baseball and soccer fields.
- Establishment of the Public Safety Department which employs two (2) full time employees -- Director of Code and Safety; and Director of Emergency Services and Fire Chief. (These directors have been heavily involved with the School District on the public safety and the safety committee.
- Creation of the Hempfield Fire Department, with a full-time fire chief and deputy chief, which oversees the twelve (12) fire departments. In addition, retention and recruitment of volunteer firefighters, not to mention fire prevention, is a strong focus, hopefully to begin with a sparked interest in the schools.
- Safer Grant with the County which makes money available for college tuition for volunteer firemen.
- In focusing more diligently on planning and growth throughout the Township, a Director of Planning and Zoning was established.

F. GENERAL DISCUSSION:

1. **Athletic Programming (School District)** –Mr. Alfery commented that he thinks the Township needs to come up with a way to have a symbiotic program in place so that the younger kids, as they start athletics in recreation, there is a smoother path or transition to the school athletic programs. Supervisor Logan said that he believed there were some past discussions about collaborating some of the recreation athletic programs with the athletic facilities at the schools. Mr. Winters advised that that Parks and Recreation Department would gladly provide the School District with the contacts for the sports travel organizations and work with them to collaborate the recreational sports programs.
2. **Delinquent Taxes (School District)** – Mr. Alfery raised the concern about the amount of delinquent taxes and if there were any ideas how to pursue collection. Township Solicitor Scott Avolio responded that it is a Westmoreland County issue, which should be addressed directly with the Westmoreland County Commissioners.
3. **Assessment Appeals and Unfunded Mandates (School District)** – Dr. Bompiani recommended that the School Board and the Supervisors and the boroughs should work together, similar to a lobbyist, to promote support for their own initiatives, such as tax revenues, on behalf of their entities, to the area senators, legislators, and commissioners.
4. **Broadband Access (School District)** – Mrs. Bretz raised the concern that there are many students that do not have broadband access at their homes and cannot use their Google Chrome books to complete their homework. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in our communities.
5. **Future Growth Areas (Township)** -- Patrick Karnash, Director of Planning and Zoning provided a brief update on some of the key growth areas and potential new growth areas:

Residential Housing Developments Proposed:

- Eastern Area -- Top of Swede Hill Road exiting onto Fosterville Road and exits down onto Fosterville – Maximum of 84 homes;
- East Hempfield Area –Maximum of 40 to 50 homes
- Northeastern Area
- New Stanton Borough – Possibly 150 homes

Commercial Developments Proposed:

- Route 30 East Corridor – Westmoreland Mall redevelopment including the casino; Iron Rock Restaurant, in addition to another new restaurant and a new amenity outside the mall; Discussions with developers of the Eastgate Shopping Center also.
- Route 30 West Corridor -- Allegheny Health Network Hospital, which is the first hospital in Hempfield Township; Also the GetGo project at the corner of Lowry, Lewis and Route 30.

Mr. Karnash noted that he is diligently working with as many developers as possible whether it be new ones or existing ones.

6. **Shared Resources – Goals/Staffing (Township)** – The Supervisors and School District discussed sharing staff, facilities, and resources for various projects through the Township.
7. **Mass Communication (Township)** – The Supervisors praised the mass communications system in place at the School District. The Township’s new website is still in its initial stage which will in the future be able to disperse mass communications. However, in the meantime, the Supervisors requested the School Directors consider granting the Township usage of their system in an emergency. In addition, there was discussion by the Supervisors about possibly acquiring the many contacts, both residential and commercial, of the School Districts to utilize in requesting consideration for donation sponsorships and fundraising.

G. SUPERVISORS’ / DIRECTORS’ COMMENTS:

Supervisor Logan commented as follows: “I really enjoyed the dialogue that we have had. We have made some great strides. Get these committees moving as quickly as possible. We’ll start to ask on our side every monthly report how the committees are doing or performing.”

Supervisor Weimer commented as follows: “Thank all of the members of the public that came out to see us this evening. I am grateful that most of the members of both boards were here tonight. I am very happy to hear that there’s encouragement to meet again as a full group publicly. It’s been a dream of mine for the last two (2) years so I’m just ecstatic tonight that we are all here. So, you know I certainly would be a proponent of us meeting at least once a year and I am happy for the fact that we are going to have some working committees – to work and keep in touch throughout the year. So, hopefully with our partnership and working together here in the future, we will be able to both promote to the community about our hopefully yearly meeting and we will have more residents who are able to attend and able to mark that down on their calendars. So, I think that was a great point for Diane to bring up that we need to kind of commit to that so we can start to promote that so that everyone is well aware of our joint meetings. I appreciate the fact that I have heard from Tony tonight that they will host the next one so we will look forward to that. I know that all of us are certainly working in the best interest of the residents, taxpayers, with the public service and we are here to work together to make sure that our community is, that Hempfield area is the best place to want to live, to work, and raise families. So, with that, I look forward to our next meeting together.”

Supervisor Silvis commented as follows: “When people are looking for a place to settle or a place to live, buy a home, etc., etc., etc., we are in a very competitive situation. We got a product that we have to develop and sell or else they will settle elsewhere. I think that we should take the blinders off and look at the whole picture. I thank everybody for coming and it was a very productive meeting.”

Supervisor Ritson commented as follows: “I just want to say thank you as well to the staffs of both. They put together very good presentations. We all know each other individually and we all talk to one another in different ways -- socially or at events or what not. So, while this is a good formal entity where we can at least be public, I think and encourage us to continue to have those individual dialogues as well and find ways to work together. I look forward to it. I’m really grateful that you guys agreed to come down and do this tonight. Thank you.”

Supervisor Reese commented as follows: “So, like I said in my opening statement, truly the way I looked at this, that it was an opportunity for the Township and the School Board to come together to start to discuss the future and advance our community. We accomplished something. We got together for the first time in twenty (20) years. It’s big. I will do everything I can to try to get us to meet quarterly. I’ll talk with our Board to try to keep this going. Committees are important and that will get us started. My commitment is to this. Believe it or not, what we did here tonight, not only those of us on both Boards wanted it, but our residents wanted to see this too. I said it before and I’ll say it again, there is one thing that we share – School Board and Supervisors – we represent the same people. Thank you so much for coming out this evening.”

Dr. Tony Bompiani: On behalf of the Hempfield Area School Directors, Dr. Bompiani expressed their gratitude for the joint meeting. He said it’s been a long time coming. Dr. Bompiani said that while the Hempfield Area School Directors will not tell the Board of Supervisor what to do with the properties in question, that they would be there as a good neighbor, to listen, to collaborate, and provide input. With regards to communicating with the School Board, Dr. Bompiani said that Dr. Wolicki, Superintendent, would point the first point of contact and she does an excellent job at keeping the Directors informed and up-to-date. Dr. Bompiani also said that he is committed to at least having quarterly meetings and the next meeting will be hosted by the School Board, and hopefully also include the area boroughs, too.

H. ADJOURNMENT

Supervisor Reese adjourned the meeting at 9:05 p.m.

Chairman

Secretary