

As advertised in the Journal Herald newspaper, the Packer Township Supervisors held their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at the township building. Bob Selert called the meeting to order and roll call was taken. All were present.

Bob Selert announced that an executive session to discuss litigation was held during the workshop meeting on December 19, 2023.

The meeting was opened to the floor. There were no comments.

Bob Selert made a motion to approve the minutes from the meetings on December 5th and 19th. Susie Gerhard seconded the motion and Terry Davis agreed. Vote 3-0.

Ordinances and Resolutions –None

Reports of Officials and Committees –

Barry Isett & Associates – Permit/Zoning & Code Enforcement Officer- Absent. ZONING:

December 4, 2023: Sent a zoning denial letter for 1458 Hudson Dr. and 469 Quakake Rd. ran the monthly Zoning report.

December 8, 2023: Email response to Attorney Stephen Seach regarding denial letter for 1458 Hudson Drive for proposed automobile repair business.

December 13, 2023: Revised zoning denial letter (469 Quakake Road)

December 26, 2023: Issued a zoning permit for an accessory building at 373 Packer Dr. Wrote a letter of my findings from my visit to 2006 Quakake Rd. on December 19.

December 29, 2023: Phone call with contractor regarding reconstruction of a previously destroyed home on Spring Mountain Road and follow up email sent with the application form.

Upcoming Court Hearings: *No court hearings are scheduled currently.

PA UCC: *No applications were received during the month of December

Bob Selert made a motion to enter the report into the minutes. Susie Gerhard seconded the motion and Terry Davis agreed. Vote 3-0

Bill Brior – Sewage Enforcement Officer – Absent. Site evaluation at 12 Station Lane and file maintenance.

Robert Selert added that 12 Station Lane is a building at the end of Station Lane on the other side of the creek. There is no sewage there and we have been advising anyone who inquires about it that they are either going to need a holding tank or upgrade the sewer system to acceptable levels.

Old Business – On the process for the appeal of the tax exempt status of the Hazleton City Authority with the Carbon County Board of Assessment Appeals Bob asked if the Supervisors want to draw up an agreement for Lausanne and Lehigh like we did with the school district. He did talk to them previously and they were on board but we should do the same for them. Atty. Yurchak responded that we would need something official from them. Bob said to do the same agreement as the school district and he will get it to them.

Regarding the status of authorization to use the adjacent property for the temporary bridge on Ochre Mill Road, Bob received a new map from the engineer and we are meeting with him next Wednesday to discuss the specifics of where the project is at. Jason Maday says it was supposed to be done by November. It's been talked about for about 10 years now. We can't even get a pot hole filled and you say you are going to change it in 8 hours? It's impossible. Bob responded that his last conversation with the engineer was rather than the temporary bridge, possibly, that if the aluminum culvert is assembled in JC's parking lot, ready to drop in place...Jason asked how heavy it is rated for. Bob-It will be rated for 80,000 lb. because they are not going to give us funding, just like this bridge right here. They are not going to be able to replace this bridge unless fully loaded tractor trailers can go over it. They are not going to give us funding to do that one. Jason-They do every

day. All day, every day. Bob-And that's not an issue. Jason-It's a state issue and that bridge to and so is the one at my house and my other house but nobody cares. Bob-Ok Jason. So the question you asked was what was the bridge going to be rated for. It's going to be rated for 80,000 lb. We would not be able to get funding unless it was built to the current standards. Jason-You couldn't afford it. You can't even get a pot hole filled at the house. I've lived there my whole life. Forty-eight years. Bob-The new bridge will be rated for 80,000 lb. Jason-Well it's only rated for 10 now. How heavy is an ambulance? Bob-I don't know. I don't check the GVWs on every vehicle that goes over that bridge. Jason-I just got taken out in one. And a fire truck. How heavy is a fire truck? Bob-That you would have to ask someone who drives one. Jason-Oh, well you're the Chairman and everything. Does anybody here know how heavy a fire truck is? Bob-It all depends. If it's a 10-wheeler it's probably 72,000 lb. Jason-Ok, so the test station, I let them use the test station on my property, they don't maintain it. Bob-The test station? Whose test station? Jason-Weatherly used to. They used to be my fire protection. I had a fire at my house and an ambulance and they're both over weight and I'm a licensed PE and I work with you. You know my boss, you work for the nuke plant and you know how much shit you got to go through to work in a nuke plant. Bob-Yes I do. Jason-Exactly. I'm an engineer just like your engineer that your, they have hired. I'm a licensed PE. That's not rated. Bob-So what is your next question? Jason-What's the status? It flooded last, the last time it flooded, the last rain storm, I lived there for 48 years. Bob-I just said that we are meeting with the engineer to discuss the project next Wednesday. It will be an open meeting. If you want to come, you're more than welcome. Jason-I'm here all the time. I talked to him multiple times. I even met with you. I marked the trees like you asked me to. I said you can use it. But you didn't come up with a plan. Bob-If you want to go check my emails to see when he sent this last updated drawing, you are welcome to. Jason-The last time you talked to me was back in April. Bob-He sent that email on the 20th. Moving forward. Jason-I don't have any answers.

Susie read the following statement.

As supervisors of Packer Township we were chosen to make decisions for the best interest for all of our residents living here in township.

We have been in negotiations with a three member committee under the umbrella of the Borough of Weatherly to secure a contract for our fire protection. Negotiations began back in August 2023 and continued through without success to the present.

Packer Township was seeking to secure a three-year contract with the borough as in previous years. This committee requested that the supervisors draft a contract for review, reflecting a ten year contract. It was stated by Mr. Vince Cuddeford, a member of the committee, that this ten-year contract was needed to secure grants for the fire company. At the current time there are no grants available which would fall under these stipulations. If grants would become available, Packer Township Supervisors would be more than willing to come back to the table to extend our contract in order to apply for any grants.

When the supervisors met with the committee there seemed to be no cooperation other than stating that this is what they are requesting. Councilman Mr. Joe Thomas stated numerous times during our negotiations and at the December 28th Borough of Weatherly Council meeting – “it is our ten year contract or nothing.”

Packer Township drafted a ten year contract with the first three years reflecting the exact figures that this committee requested, and the remaining seven years with a percentage increase until 2033. It totaled over a 43% increase up to that time. The committee again rejected our proposal, stating they request that the last seven years reflect the Cost of Living increase only. Again, Mr. Thomas stated “our ten year contract or nothing.”

We feel that this committee is stonewalling our township while we are trying to make the best decision for fire protection for our residents.

We have been contracted with the Weatherly Citizen's Fire Company for many, many years and would prefer to remain good neighbors. RESIDENTS: Please be aware, there is currently fire protection for our Packer Township residents until a final contract is signed. Fire companies – Weatherly, Lehigh & Lausanne, Beaver Meadows, Tresckow will be dispatched if something occurs. Weatherly's Citizens Fire Company is still the primary to be dispatched. I would hope that their decision would be to respond.

A meeting will be scheduled this week between Packer Twp. and Weatherly Borough to work together to expedite an agreement. Information will be published in the next newsletter. Please try to refrain from read-

ing incorrect information on social media. If you have questions, call the township office or any supervisor. We are more than willing to talk. Thank you for your patience in this matter.

Susie asked if there were any questions. John Floyd commented that in the statement the Weatherly Fire Company was mentioned. The Weatherly Fire Company itself has nothing to do with your negotiations. You're negotiating with Weatherly Borough. Susie-I understand that. John just wants to make sure everybody understands that we stand over here all by ourselves. Susie-Correct. John-As the fire company we have to do what the borough tells us to do because they are our primary source of income. Susie-Right. Dan Dargay-All the money that we pay, does that go to the fire company, end up going to the fire company or does it go into the Borough coffers? Susie-It goes into the Borough. The check gets paid right to the Borough. Dan-So we don't really know how much of that money goes to the fire company. Bob-The budget that they have presented pretty much does all go to the fire company. They are not pocketing anything. All the expenses that the fire company does have comes between our money and what the Borough budgets for the fire company. Right now I think they are around \$98,000 of which we contribute about \$28,000. John Floyd-Our budget this year is \$104,000 from the Borough. Bob-So you're looking at maybe a 3 or 4% increase. The first year of the contract, they are over-budget on their maintenance budget which is what drove the 5.4% increase that they are asking from us for next year. Which we instructed our secretary at the special meeting to go by that number, not the previous number from 2023. So we are more than willing to pay our fair share. It's just the length of the agreement and years 5-10 that we are having a disagreement about. Jennifer Berger asked if we would be paying the same amount as the Weatherly residents. They are not going to charge us more than the Weatherly resident are going to be charged. Bob-Currently, we are paying the same per capita as they are. Jennifer-But are you going to say to them well we are only going to pay the same amount as the Weatherly residents? Bob-Again, the first proposal that the Borough negotiating committee gave us is where they are still at. There has been no movement on their part what-so-ever. Terry-Actually there was a rumor going around that our fire tax collects more money than what we actually have to pay the Borough and he talked to Stephanie about it. We actually take money out of our general fund. It doesn't even cover the total so that can be squashed. Bob-The .97 mills that we passed generates around \$27,500 roughly and we're paying \$28,000 so money has been coming out of the general fund for years to cover that. Jennifer-Well then raise it because the day we had our fire or you have a fire at your house, you're going to pray that somebody shows up and you're going to pray that they are not coming from over the mountain or out the other way of the valley or out the other end of Weatherly. Because my house almost caught. We lost everything in our garage and the side of my house started to catch. If Weatherly and Beaver Meadows wouldn't have been there my house would have gone up to. Jason-That is when we had fire protection with Weatherly. They stand there and watch it burn. So now you're telling me that I'm safe living on a road where the only access is a condemned bridge that's been sitting there for 10 years that floods, that's undersized for the garbage truck. Jennifer-Packer Township does nothing for us, nothing. And now we can't even depend on fire protection if this doesn't go through. Terry Berger asked what was the cost going up per resident compared to the cost Weatherly people pay. Bob-The past agreement was based on per capita. It was even across the board. I forget the figure that we were at \$29 a person. It's hard to look at the .97 mills, the .97 mills is property assessment so when you divide that, what that brings in to our 1042 residents from our last census. That is what our \$29 per capita is based on and it's about equal. We have made them more than a generous offer. 43% over the 10 years and they are stuck on the cost of living. That is where we are butting heads. Resident-I did some numbers on my own. If you took the residents to \$28,000 our budget gives them and you figure per resident, they are at about \$26 per individual. You do it to Weatherly with their budget of what's left, 70 some thousand out of their \$104,000, they are paying \$27 per person so I don't see what the problem is. Bob-It's years 5-10 that we are not agreeing on. They want the cost of living. Look at projections it's hard to find a cost of living projection. You have to look for an inflation index. So if you look at the inflation indexes out there, they are all years 5-10, that is 6 years, it is probably around 2%. We have offered more than the 2%. They are stuck on the cost of living. Year four was the 2% minimum that they first asked for and in years 5-10 was over 4% and that's where we are at. We expect to move forward now that there is a new council so give us time. They are supposed to dispatch 3 fire companies if there is a problem out here so I'm sure we're going to have coverage. Resident-

What happens if they don't come with any water? Let's be honest. Weatherly doesn't have to respond. They can get the first tone out. But they don't have to respond because they can sit there and say we didn't get any volunteers to show. It's hopefully not your house or your family or whatever. Jennifer-If somebody is trapped in a house. Resident-Or if somebody is in an accident somewhere. That's the other problem. This intersection gets an accident all the time. People don't know how to drive this intersection. Bob-I'm going to answer this one way. Bob asks Atty. Yurchak who was the first fire company on scene when your house burned. Atty. Yurchak responded Treschow. And my house burned down, totally.

New Business – Susie Gerhard made a motion to appoint Bob Selert delegate to the Carbon County Tax Collection Committee. Terry Davis seconded the motion. Bob Selert agreed. Vote 3-0
Bob explained that a year ago, Berkheimer was up for renewal and the Tax Collection Committee solicited bids. They gave Berkheimer a 10 year agreement. We are required by law to have quarterly meetings which they very seldom have a quorum for but there is no business before that tax collection committee meeting for another 9 years as that is all the business that they do.

Bob Selert nominated Susie Gerhard to attend the PSATS Annual Conference in Hershey on April 14-17, 2024. Terry Davis seconded the motion. Susie Gerhard agreed. Vote 3-0

Bob Selert nominated Susie Gerhard as the voting delegate. Terry Davis seconded the motion and Susie Gerhard agreed. Vote 3-0

Bob Selert made a motion to approve the treasurer's report. Susie Gerhard seconded the motion and Terry Davis agreed. Vote 3-0

Bob Selert made a motion to sign and approve the checks drafted. Susie Gerhard seconded the motion and Terry Davis agreed. Vote 3-0

Terry Davis put "No Winter Maintenance" signs up today at County Bridge #4 on Grist Mill Drive due to the 3 ton weight limit. The plow trucks are over the weight limit. Bob-We will probably plow up to it from the west side and will stop at the entrance to Wallace Way on the east side as there is no place to turn around.

Bob Selert made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Susie Gerhard seconded the motion. Terry Davis agreed. Vote 3-0

The meeting was adjourned at 6:31 p.m. A total of 18 residents attended the meeting.

Respectfully submitted
Stephanie Stolpe
Packer Township Secretary/Treasurer