

RICE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MINUTES
December 5, 2023

The duly advertised meeting of the Rice Township Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, December 5, 2023. Copies of the Agenda, draft Minutes of the November 8, 2023 meeting, and Treasurer's Reports for November are available to the public. Chairman Robert Pipech called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and called for the Pledge of Allegiance. It was announced that the meeting was being recorded for preparing the minutes. Video cameras were also recording the meeting. Pipech asked Judge Webby to swear in Maverick, the K-9 unit. Webby offered comments of thanks and encouragement and Maverick was sworn in through Officer Stout. Following the ceremony, the Mountain Top Area Community Association donated \$250 and St. Martin In The Fields donated \$750, both in support of the K-9 unit.

ROLL CALL: Arnold – here via telephone
Pipech - here
Smith - here

Also present were: Please see sign-in sheet

PUBLIC COMMENT: Pipech called for public comment, noting that such comment at the beginning of the meeting should be directed at agenda items. There was none.

ENGINEER'S REPORT: Engineer Pasonick reported that the walkway has been installed at the Ice Lake Dam and the sluice gate was installed and operational. A leak test must be performed and other minor clean up items need to be addressed. Pasonick also noted the Columbia Excavating was processing paper work for the 2023 Drainage Project.

BUSINESS MATTERS:

MOTION by Smith, second by Arnold, to accept the Minutes of the Regular meeting held on November 8, 2023.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

Received the Treasurer's Report for November, 2023: Treasurer Beck referred to the General Fund check register, noting check number 4235 for \$18,500 for the purchase and training of Maverick. Moving on to the General Fund Budget vs Actual report, Beck pointed out that total tax receipts were on budget, and expressed concern that the number was not higher. Beck then referred to the net deficit on page 6 of the report of \$404 thousand, but that LSA grant reimbursements totaling \$297,000 would bring the deficit into the budget target. Shifting to Liquid Fuels, Beck estimated a net surplus for the year around \$70,000. Beck reported that the General Fund balances totaled \$348,074.84 with (\$10,801.10) restricted for K-9 donations. Liquid Fuels balances totaled \$96,262.53 and Recreation Fund balances totaled \$3,609.86, all for a total of \$447,947.23 cash on hand. Restricted balances include \$514.49 in the DCNR Grant Account and \$5,156.69 in the Developers' Escrow Account for a total of \$5,671.18 of restricted funds, all as of November 30, 2023.

RICE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MINUTES
December 5, 2023

BUSINESS MATTERS Cont.

MOTION by Smith, second by Arnold, to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented and all bills to be paid.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

Received the Roadmaster's Report for November, 2023: Roadmaster Pipech reported that the Public Works crew was using cold patch as weather permits. All trucks were running and the salt shed has been filled. Pipech also reported that FirstLight Fiber will no longer be renting space at the old fire hall property after this year.

MOTION by Smith, second by Arnold, to accept the Roadmaster's Report as presented.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

Received the Police Report for November, 2023: Chief Ehret made his report and added that Maverick has already been dispatched on several calls including the high school.

MOTION by Smith, second by Pipech, to accept the Police Report as presented.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

Received the Zoning Report for November, 2023 as presented by Zoning Officer Mleczynski.

MOTION by Smith, second by Arnold, to accept the Zoning Report as presented.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

Received the SEO Report for November, 2023 as presented by Secretary Beck.

MOTION by Smith, second by Pipech, to accept the SEO Report as presented.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

In compliance with the Police Contract:

MOTION by Smith, second by Arnold, to approve Resolution 2023-9 which states that payments into the police pension fund by members of the police department are eliminated for the year 2024, and no deductions should be made from the pay of the members for the purpose of contributing to the police pension fund.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

RICE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MINUTES
December 5, 2023

BUSINESS MATTERS Cont.

In compliance with the Police Contract: Smith asked Beck to explain that such a COLA can occur 10 times over a 30-year period. Given the high rates of inflation over the last two years, granting this COLA makes sense.

MOTION by Smith, second by Arnold, to approve the cost-of-living increase (COLA) to Robert Franks, Jr. of 3% for 2024.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes

Pipech - yes

Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Arnold, second by Smith, to approve the calendar of meeting dates for the Board of Supervisors as the first Tuesday of every month, 2024, except November, when the Board shall meet on Wednesday, November 6 to avoid election day, and the calendar of meetings for the Planning Commission as the fourth Wednesday of every month, 2024, except for November and December when those meetings are held on the Wednesday one week prior to avoid holidays, and for said meeting dates to be advertised.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes

Pipech - yes

Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Smith, second by Arnold, to adopt the following budget for Rice Township for 2024.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes

Pipech - yes

Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

RICE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MINUTES
December 5, 2023

Rice Township-General Fund		PROPOSED BUDGET 2024
Income		
Total 300.00 · TAXES		\$ 1,173,150
Total 320 · LICENSES AND PERMITS		\$ 17,000
Total 331.00 · FINES AND FORFEITS		\$ 6,260
Total 340.00 · INTEREST, RENTS AND ROYALTIES		\$ 26,350
Total 354.00 · STATE CAPITAL & OPER GRANTS		\$ 1,261,500
Total 355.00 · STATE SHARED REV. & ENTITLEMENT		\$ 96,510
Total 356.00 · STATE PMT IN LIEU OF TAXES		\$ 1,277
Total 357.00 - Local Govt Grants		\$ 443,000
Total 358.00 · LOCAL GOV PMT CONTRACTED SVCS		\$ 34,067
Total 360-370 · CHRGS FOR SERVICE(DEPT EARNING)		\$ 23,000
Total 380.00 · MISCELLANEOUS INCOME		\$ 5,020
Total 389.00 - UNCLASSIFIED OPERATING INCOME		\$ 1,000
Gross Profit		\$3,088,134
Expense		
Total 400-409 · GENERAL GOVERNMENT		\$ 195,994
Total 410-419 · PUBLIC SAFETY CAT		\$ 601,840
Total 426-429 · PUBLIC WORKS-SANITATION		\$ 19,010
Total 430-439 · PUBLIC WORKS-HWYS /STREETS		\$1,595,845
Total 450-459 - CULTURE/RECREATION		\$ 22,250
Total 481-484 · EMPLOYER PAID BENEFITS \$ WITHHO		\$ 150,868
Total 486.00 · INSURANCE		\$ 71,448
Total 487.00 · HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFIT		\$ 242,136
Total 489.00 - UNCLASSIFIED EXPENDITURES		\$ 1,800
Total 491.00 · REFUND PRIOR YEAR REVENUE		\$ 50
492.00 · INTERFUND TRANSFERS		\$ 450,500
Total 493.00 · EMPLOYEE RELATED BENEFITS		\$ 3,750
6560 · Payroll Expenses		\$ 1,200
Total Expense		\$3,356,691
Net Income		\$ (268,557)
Transfer from Prior Years		\$ 268,557
Net surplus (deficit)		\$ -

RICE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MINUTES

December 5, 2023

PROPOSED

RICE TOWNSHIP 2024		BUDGET
LIQUID FUELS		2024
Income		
341.00 · INTEREST ON DEPOSITS		\$ 1,800
355.02 · LIQUID FUEL TAX		\$ 132,985
Total Income		\$ 134,785
Expense		
430.00 - PUBLIC WORKS ADMIN		\$ 10
432.00 · SNOW REMOVAL		\$ 40,000
433.00 - ROAD SIGNS		\$ 1,000
434.00 · Street Lighting		\$ 24,000
437.00 · REPAIRS & MAINT. TO EQUIPMI		\$ 25,000
438.00 · MAINT. & REPAIRS TO ROADS		\$ 78,250
Total Expense		\$ 168,260
Net Income		\$ (33,475)
	SURPLUS FROM PRIOR YEAR	\$ 33,475
	Net Surplus (deficit)	\$ -

RICE TOWNSHIP		PROPOSED
RECREATION FUND		BUDGET
		2024
Income		
341.00 · INTEREST EARNINGS		\$ 6
392.00 · Transfer from General Fund		\$ 450,500
Total Income		\$ 450,506
Expense		
454.00 · PARKS		\$ 443,000
457 · CIVIL AND MILITARY CELEBRATIO		\$ 7,500
Total Expense		\$ 450,500
Net Income		\$ 6

RICE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MINUTES

December 5, 2023

Rice Township Tax Rates

Total.....0.26 mills (property assessed value x \$0.00026)
Real Estate Transfer Taxes.....1/2 of 1% collected
Local Services Tax.....\$5.00 Township; \$5.00 School District

There is NO tax increase for 2024.

BUSINESS MATTERS Cont.:

MOTION by Arnold, second by Smith, to pass Resolution 2024-1 that the above millage and tax rate for Rice Township for 2024 be adopted as presented.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Smith, second by Pipech, to approve the following dues payments for 2024:

\$295.00 to Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance
\$30.00 to the Luzerne County Boroughs and Townships Association
\$150.00 to the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Arnold, second by Smith, to authorize up to \$4,950 for the second annual Holiday Tree Lighting event.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Smith, second by Arnold, to give full-time employees a holiday bonus of \$75 as a thank you for their dedicated service.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Smith, second by Pipech, to adopt Solar Panel Ordinance 2023-2.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Smith, second by Pipech, to adopt Stormwater Management Ordinance 2023-1.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Pipech, second by Smith, to amend the agenda whereby Resolution 2023-10 as required to join the PSATS Short-Term Disability Plan and to add such Resolution to the following Motion, the impact of this change does not affect expenses and is de minimus.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

RICE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MINUTES
December 5, 2023

BUSINESS MATTERS Cont.:

MOTION by Arnold, second by Pipech, to join the PSATS Short-term Disability Level 2 Plan via adoption of Resolution 2023-10 at an annual cost not to exceed \$2,200.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Smith, second by Pipech, to approve Pay Application #3 from Fabcor in the amount of \$206,824.61 for the Ice Ponds Dam Retrofit Project as recommended by the Township Engineer.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Arnold, second by Smith, to adopt the decision by poll to allow the Secretary/Treasurer to attend the PSATS QuickBooks webinar on November 30, 2023 at a cost of \$55 and the Conservation District Municipal Session on December 8, 2023 at a cost of \$28.52.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Smith, second by Arnold, to enter into the one-year contract with Geisinger for the Geisinger Funding Alternative Plan from 2/1/2024 to 1/31/2025 at a maximum cost of \$224,667.72, an increase of 4.67%.

ROLL CALL: Arnold - yes Pipech - yes Smith - yes

MOTION CARRIED.

Pipech reported that the Supervisors want to thank the residents for their cooperation and participation in the fall leaf program. Leaves brought to the recycle center by residents resulted in 2 dumpsters being filled and is estimated to have saved close to \$30,000 in taxpayer expense, allowing our Public Works Crew to patch roads and prepare the trucks for inclement weather; that the Planning Commission met on November 15; and that the reorganization meeting of the Board of Supervisors will be held on Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 7:00 p.m., and the first regular meeting of the Board will be held immediately following. The reorganization meeting of the Township Auditors will be held on Wednesday, January 3, 2024 at 5:00 p.m..

The Wright Township Volunteer Fire Company (WTVFD) Report & Fire Police Incident Recap was presented by Gary Price, President of WTVFD.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT: The Solicitor had no report but announced that an executive session would immediately follow the meeting to discuss personnel issues.

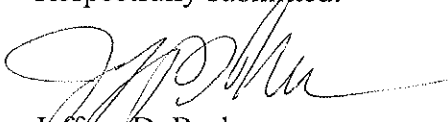
PUBLIC COMMENT: Resident James Perdoch confirmed that the Township uses a cash-accounting basis and requested that the dog signs be pursued for Laurel Lakes. In response to Perdoch's question, Pipech noted that Ice House Drive will have line painting in the spring. Resident Jeannie Vonderlinn complained about incursion into the Township right-of-way on Deer Rack Drive. The Solicitor will look into it.

RICE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MINUTES
December 5, 2023

The Board of Supervisors, Police and Employees wish everyone a very happy, safe and healthy Holiday Season.

MOTION by Pipech, second by Smith, to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m..

Respectfully submitted:



Jeffrey D. Beck

Secretary/Treasurer