

Centre Documenters

Meeting: Board of Supervisors
Township: Halfmoon
Documenters: Aria Eichhof, Emily McGrory
Date: 11/9/2023
Start Time: 7:00
End Time: 8:05

Members in attendance

David C. Piper (chair)
Ronald B. Servello (vice chair)
Patricia C. Hartle (member)
Charles F. Beck (member)
Rose Ann Hoover (member)

Notes

The Halfmoon Board of Supervisors meeting started with the pledge of allegiance and a reminder that C-Net was streaming the evening's meeting live ([available on YouTube](#)).

There was a motion to adjust the agenda this month to start with resident Sharon Rovansek and the diversity, equity & inclusion portion of the agenda (originally scheduled as item 17).

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Resident Sharon Rovansek was invited to speak to start the meeting with an update on several months or time periods of recognition in Centre County.

- Hispanic Heritage Month took place from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15. This celebratory month was passed by congress in 1988. "Acknowledge that Hispanic men and women have made a valuable contribution and continue to do so in all areas of life in Center County," Sharon Rovansek said.
- Day of the Dead also just took place on Nov. 1. "Instead of fearing the dead, like many do on Halloween, this is a celebration of those who passed," explained Sharon Rovansek.
- Native American Heritage Month is the month of November. "Native Americans are essential to fabric of the United States. They served in the U.S. Armed Forces

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at a higher rate than any other ethnic group. Their contributions in science, humanities, arts, and public service have brought prosperity for all of us,” read resident Lenore Foster, citing a statement from the White House. “Please consider attending the Penn State Powwow. It will be held Feb. 24 and 25, next year at the C3 Sports Complex. You will be educated and entertained,” said Foster.

A note from your documenter: the meeting was paused to bring local residents sitting in the hallway into the main room. An additional row was created for them.

Public Comments

No public comments were presented.

Minutes (from past meetings)

Chair David Piper announced each of the following meeting minutes and asked if the board had any comment, then sought their approval:

- Oct. 12, 2023 – no comment, no discussion – *approved*.
- Oct. 18, 2023 – no comment, no discussion – *approved*.

Consent Agenda

Ratification of the bills list for the period of Oct. 7 to Oct. 20, 2023. General fund amounting to \$66,172.62.

Bill gets paid from the preservation fund amounting to \$1,088.09.

Ratification of bills list for the period of Oct 21 to Nov. 3, 2023 from the following general fund amount: \$62,357.07.

Motion to approve the consent agenda. Approved by the board.

A note from your documenter: These documents were not provided to members of the public in attendance.

Autumn Meadow Park Tree- Presentation by Thomas Spanos

- Thomas Spanos, a boy scout, is building picnic tables and planting trees in Autumn Meadow Park in Port Matilda. Spanos has all of the supplies he needs, and he will start building the tables in the spring (“because it is getting a little cold now”). He attended the Board of Supervisors meeting on Nov. 9 to ask for their approval of the 4 trees of his choosing: 1 black gum and 3 white oaks (both native to Pennsylvania). The types of trees were approved and Spanos said he would be planting them before Thanksgiving. Spanos noted that Home Depot gave \$50 off the price of wood and Ace provided all of the painting supplies (treys, paint,

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“everything”) as a donation. He is also working with Wheatfield Nursery who committed to 30 percent off the cost of the trees. A resident in the audience commented that they would donate watering bags for the trees. The board previously approved financial support for the trees.

- Spanos and the board discussed the need for him to have a PA-1 call, required if he plans on digging the holes himself.

Ordinance 2023-06: Centre Region Cog Local Planning Services Withdrawal

Chair Piper noted that there were no public comments around the ordinance that would have Halfmoon Township withdraw from the Centre Region COG Planning Services for 2025. They opened and closed the public hearing.

“We’re following suit with other municipalities within Center region so, I’m ok with it. I move to adopt,” said vice chair Ronald Servello.

The motion was passed by all members.

Resolution 2023-31 -- A Port Matilda EMS grant

An amendment is being made to authorize a second person to write the grant. Amy M. Smith is currently on the grant and the board is considering adding Brett G. Laird as the second responsible party are responsible for writing up this grant, according to chair David Piper.

Permission to advertise the FY 2024 budget & set public hearing for Dec. 14, 2023

A community member noted that Halfmoon township is less than a 1% member of COG.

The township had a credit due to under-spending their budget in 2023. Our fee for next year went from approximately \$126,000 (2023) and \$137,000 (2024) approximately, then the township was given a “rebate” (or “a credit”) toward the township’s contribution, making it about \$81,000 for 2024.

“But the cost per hour went up ... or will go up,” said chair Piper.

“We still have to have a planner. We’re going to be spending money hiring a firm to do that planning for us. We’re going to have to spend that money or more to have that planning. We’re going to need planning next year.”

“Isn’t every other township in that same boat,” the resident asked.

“Yup,” Piper and Servello confirmed.

“The ones that decided to get out [of COG planning],” Piper added.

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“I understand what’s being said but it’s understandable. Everything goes up. There’s inflation, the area’s growing, the region’s growing,” said member Patricia Hartle.

“But we’re not growing,” said chair Piper, “that’s the thing.”

“But we benefit from that growth,” said Hartle.

“The growth in this budget was [due to] changes in compensation, changes in [the] number of employees. It’s not just ‘it’s going up’ due to inflation.”

“No, I said because of the growth of the area,” said Hartle, “If the area grows, you need more employees and you also have to pay them accordingly.”

“The growth in this budget is not just for inflation. It’s changes in compensation. Changes in [the] number of employees.”

After a long pause, chair Piper said, “Alright, well I see this gonna go nowhere. I think you’ve got a sense of the mood of the board, for good or bad.”

This motion was approved, but audience members circled back to this topic towards the end of the meeting.

Community questions regarding the fire company budget and comment process

***A note from your documenter:** a conversation was initiated by a community member in the audience. This included a lot of back and forth. We have done our best to share that with you here.*

“The purpose of the meetings is for us to prepare a budget. We had several work meetings, if you will, for us to prepare the budget,” said a board member.

“How many?” asked community member Dave Crow.

“It doesn’t matter. As many as we need. We needed one,” said Servello

“But no one was here to contribute,” said Crow.

“It was a public meeting. It’s not a matter... it’s for us to prepare a budget. The board of Supervisors to prepare a budget. That’s the purpose of the meetings” said Servello, “not to have discussions.”

“Why are you yelling? Why are you scolding. I’m trying to understand. The fire company had a budget in the neighborhood in the neighborhood of \$100,000 a year. It’s been cut significantly. And the first and only opportunity for... I’m confused.”

“We’re conducting the business of the township,” said Servello.

Chair Piper hits his gavel on the tablem and said: “The way this works is: the board of

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supervisors sits down with staff at a public meeting and we prepared a budget. Ok. Tonight, we have voted to move that budget forward for a public hearing. That's where the public gets to comment on the budget. They can come in and say, "We don't like the amount of money you're spending on streetlights. We don't like the fire company's money. Whatever it is, you have the right to come in and do that at the public hearing."

"And then you pass the budget the next day," said Crow.

"Well, sometimes we pass it the same day, but we can make amendments to the budget once the public hearing is over," said Servello. "That's your point when the public comes in and comments on it. You can write something up and submit it to the township if you want for the supervisors to look at and if you've got some compelling reason, put it in there."

Crow responded: "It seems to me we're quibbling over \$3,000 here and talking about getting our budgets in order and how the fire company and other entities that come to the township are going to be scolded for not having their ducks in a row and not having their budget in proper order and how dare you ask for another \$3,000, but the fire company is being cut by at least 30 percent by any measure. The fire tax has been removed, all capital expenses."

Member Hartle responded: "I know there was a point in the summer when people came in and presented their budgets, like Warriors Mark came in. But I don't believe we heard from Port Matilda because I think, chief, you were ill. I was expecting that would get rescheduled and that you'd come in and present. We did not have the back and forth with Port Matilda that we were able to have with Warriors Mark."

Servello responded: "Well, there was an opportunity there, Patti [Hartle], for them to reschedule to come in and be on the agenda and discuss it."

"When?" asked Crow.

"In June, we did invite both fire companies," explained a township staff member. In the initial back and forth process, John Witherite (of Port Matilda) was included, but due to an illness and then having to respond to a fire company call during a scheduled meeting, fire chief Witherite could no longer participate in the process on the township's timeline.

The Port Matilda fire chief John Witherite said he did attempt to join last month's meeting, but he was "at the top of the mountain" on his way when the fire company was called out.

"Did you budget for what he asked for?" asked Crow.

According to treasurer Brett G. Laird, the "low" budget came to be after fire company representatives failed to attend the budget meeting. Since the board and the fire company never came to a full agreement, the initial budget (proposed by the fire company in June 2023) was given to the board for consideration and the final budget

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amount, less than what was proposed, was decided upon by the board.

Permission to Advertise for the 2024 Bituminous & Aggregate Bid

This is a list of the big prices for 2024 materials. This list has been tailored to what the staff needs, and they are ready to get the advertising out, Chuck L. Beck said.

Treasurer Job Description

Treasurer Brett G. Laird “did a good job,” according to Ron Servello, Supervisor.

Secretary Job Description

No comments.

2024 Centre Region Cog Summary Budget

Following the budget increase of 10.6%, audience member Eric [surname unknown], was requesting more money for improving interstate roads. Servello had an issue with the budget and was backed by supervisor Piper saying “I don’t like the budget. It’s bloated, it needs to be cut back.”

Township Reports

No township reports were presented.

Authority, Board and Committee Reports

No authority, board or committee reports were presented.

Adjournment

Summary

- Budgets were top of mind at the meeting, specifically around the fire company’s budget and allocation to address improvements to interstate roads. Both of these discussions were prompted by and included length discussions with local residents in attendance.
- Thomas Spanos, a boy scout, is building picnic tables and planting trees in Autumn Meadow Park in Port Matilda. He has received the wood and the paint, and he will begin to work on building his tables this winter. He attended the Board of Supervisors meeting on Nov. 9 to ask for their approval of the 4 trees he has chosen, all Pennsylvania native. The types of trees were approved and Spanos said he had plans to plant them the following week.

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Follow-Up Questions

- Where was there miscommunication between the public and the board regarding follow-up meetings for the summary budget? *This would be ideal to look at past and meeting minutes to better understand.*

Top Quote

“We’re part of a Center Region Council of Governments, and we have a vote and a voice in that body,” said Ron Servello, Supervisor, commenting on the requests for a larger budget, which was made by more than one audience member. “... for us to just look at simple dollars, you’re not looking at the big picture.”

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