

HICKORY TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MONTHLY MEETING
April 24, 2019

The budget review meeting of the Hickory Township Board of Supervisors held at the Hickory Township Municipal Building was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chairperson Kathleen Abranovich immediately followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Supervisors Present: Kathleen Abranovich - Chairperson
William Dean
Michael Hall

Staff Present: Jason Medure, Esquire – Solicitor
Lisa L. Schlemmer, Secretary/Treasurer

Other Attendees:

Brian Jackson	David Johns
Amy Johns	Lucille Wallas
Chris Fabian	Joseph Sager
Jack Freed	Denny Bevan
Gary Finley	Richard Alley
Jon Sweet	Jodi Disman
Wayne Patterson	Kevin Hiler
Chad Adams	Lenonard A. Rich
Jeff Hammerschmidt	James Eppinger
James P. McGee	

Supervisor Abranovich opened with a statement that the sole purpose of the meeting was to conduct a quarterly review of the 2019 budget. However, the Supervisors were aware of growing public concern about Hickory Township's notice to quit the school resource officer contract with the Laurel School District for the upcoming school year. Given the meeting attendance and social media commentary, public comments would be heard on the school resource officer matter. Attendees were reminded of the Hickory Township meeting protocol concerning time limits and residency requirements.

Each attendee was called by name and afforded an opportunity to comment. Attendees stated their reason for attending but reserved further comments or questions following the review of the budget and further discussions by the Board.

Supervisor Abranovich provided a lengthy and informative statement outlining the Hickory Township's position on the school resource officer.

Lucille Wallas, being employed by at Shenango Area School District, spoke to her knowledge of other options available to Laurel School District to have a school resource officer or school police officer. She stated that Shenango hired two (2) retired troopers from the Pennsylvania State Police who serve as their school police officers. These officers are neither affiliated nor supplied by the Shenango Police Department. Shenango hired them independently and they are on the Shenango Area School District payroll.

Solicitor Medure provided an outline of the offer submitted by Laurel School District to Hickory Township to maintain police coverage as follows: Laurel wants Hickory Township to provide one full time officer and one part time officer; Laurel is willing to pay the salary of a full time officer for the 9-month school year and Hickory Township would need to absorb the full time officer into the township police rotation during the summer months; Laurel would pay a portion of the full time officer's medical benefit; Laurel would pay for the officer's required training; Hickory township would be responsible for the remainder of expenses, (i.e. taxes, workers' compensation, uniforms, etc.)

Supervisor Dean offered that Hickory Township has provided a school resource officer since 2011/2012. He is in favor of continuing a working relationship with the Laurel School District, but only in the event that the costs of school officers are equitably distributed between all three (3) townships that make up the school district.

Supervisor Abranovich advised that Hickory Township has approached Slippery Rock Township and Scott Township twice about a regional police department which would distribute the costs of school officers equally, but those townships have no interest in such discussions. Given the lack of participation by the other townships, the only equitable solution is that Laurel School District, who collects school taxes from all three townships, hire and pay for school resource officers. She stated that school protection is the responsibility of Laurel School District and should not be shouldered solely by Hickory Township residents as it has been. She also offered that a number of other area school districts hire their own school security detail and numerous area full time police departments do not provide school officers.

Solicitor Medure stated that Hickory Township is a part time police department. Hiring a full time police officer would create a plethora of issues with the Hickory Township Police Department Collective Bargaining Agreement concerning seniority issues, scheduling, benefits, pension, etc.

Jack Freed attended the meeting to address the water issue on Bowden Road at the end of his driveway. Supervisor Dean offered that Hickory Township had filed a Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Road Maintenance Grant Application this year seeking assistance to address the issue. The Lawrence County Conservation District reviewed the project, however, it did not score high enough and the application was rejected. Mr. Freed stated that he knew about the grant as he had an opportunity to speak with the representative from the Lawrence County Conservation District when she viewed the site. Mr. Freed states that he is willing to fix the issue himself and simply wants to convene with the Supervisors to ensure that his proposal is feasible and that he has approval. The Supervisors intend to meet with Mr. Freed.

Various line items of the 2019 budget were flagged for consideration of the budget allotment amount in comparison with first quarter balances. Line items discussed included insurance (hospitalization, dental, eye and life insurance); workers' compensation; hourly roadmaster labor; secretary/treasurer hourly; Hickory Township Park insurance; and cable franchise.

Jon Sweet offered his opinion that fat could be trimmed from the budget. He stated that if the township did not have full time roadmasters that the budget would afford paying for all of the additional costs associated with supplying Laurel School District with a school resource officer.

Supervisor Abranovich stated that we have one full time roadmaster and one part time roadmaster whose wages are set by the elected Auditors and not the Supervisors. She referred comments to Chris Fabian and Wayne Patterson, being elected auditors in attendance, about setting the supervisor wages. Both Chris Fabian and Wayne Patterson stated that they set the supervisor wages based upon the annual municipal salary survey of all Pennsylvania municipalities, research comparable rates for our area, social security increases, etc. in the interest of compensating the supervisors fairly. Chris Fabian stated that a full time supervisor at the current hourly wage would gross \$38,168.00 a year.

There was a brief discussion about full time hours versus working hourly only as needed, researching other affordable insurance options, whether the township should hire a township manager, etc. Various options are under consideration.

A motion was made by Supervisor Hall, seconded by Supervisor Dean to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 PM. Motion carried.