

Lower Saucon Township
Budget Advisory Committee Meeting

Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2015

Meeting began at 4:02 PM

Roll Call: Present – Charlie Luthar, Tina Krasnanksy, Cathy Gorman, Lou Mahlman, Roger Rasich, Chief Guy Lesser, Chris Garges and Leslie Huhn

- 1. Public Works:** Roger said most of the budget is set by example of prior years' experience. Equipment is replaced every 11 years. We give council a 5 year capital plan for equipment and major purchases. He uses an 11 year plan because historically heavy equipment needs to be replaced every 10 years but still holds a pretty high resale value. This keeps the fleet reliable and we get decent money for the trade in. This varies year to year and also depends on need and condition. This year we will be requesting a new utility tractor which is \$30,000. This will replace the 750 bought in 1986 and 1145 bought in 1992. With the development of the rails to trails and woodland preserves there is a lot of side vegetation. The sickle bar mower will allow maintenance of this.

Material and supplies are in the general budget and state fund. The vast majority comes out of those. Such as general maintenance, cold patch, stone, concrete for sink holes or gutters. Any little thing that is required for the road. The balance is for the road project. We try to base road projects on the amount of time needed and labor needed. There are a lot of roads that are always in need of some type of maintenance. It isn't about running out of money but running out of time. Cathy said we try to budget 100k in there every year. We don't always reach the 100k because we can't complete the projects. We are behind a couple of years and we can't base future budgets on that.

Charlie asked how many road crew members there are. Roger said there are 10 full time and 2 part time summer help. Another big hit is the uncontrollable amount of snow. This increases salt usage which is a state contract purchase. You have to give a number in March and you can take up to 60% but no more than 140%. Cathy said all of these funds come out of state fund.

Charlie asked about 4 day work weeks. Roger said it is from the first full week in June and until Labor Day. Charlie asked if it is primarily driven by road projects. Roger said it is a morale booster and more work is done.

Cathy said payroll is contractual. Materials and supplies have clothing allowance, cleaning items for trucks, nuts bolts. Traffic sign maintenance and repairs is around 15k. Money is in both general and state for those things. Roger said road and street signs and markings are for double yellow line striping of about 40 miles. This year we started the white fog lines. This can't be done on all roads because they aren't wide enough. Cathy said equipment rental is used for things like cutting down trees. There are times when we need equipment that we just don't have. Charlie asked where to we use contract people. Roger said we only use two types of contracted people. One is the grass mowing. We still do some grass mowing and some of the rough stuff. For example, Woodland Hills Preserve. Roger said it is very reasonable. Cathy said in our parks general contract we have 86k and the last couple years we have paid 50-55k for grass cutting. Roger said this is about \$13-\$15 an acre. This is cutting and trimming. Cathy said that between having to hire new employees and equipment this is the cheaper option. Cathy said this also includes the rental of our portable bathrooms and Tru Green treatments. Roger said it also includes vehicle O/M/R. That can be found in 3 places here, state fund and general fund under police dept. We can do inspections and maintenance work in house. We maintain the lights

on 378 even though it is a state road. The lines on the road and street signs are also ours to maintain. Cathy said the traffic signals are contracted with Signal Service.

- a. **Parks:** Cathy said we used to have funds for each park so we could track each expense. With our computer system we don't need to do that anymore. Roger said most of all of the parks have baseball fields that require maintenance. There are restrooms and parking lots that also need maintenance. Charlie asked if we had any sports teams that take care of the fields. Roger said we don't have that. We have nice equipment to maintain the fields. There are two workers who maintain the parks. Roger said we have pavilions that we also maintain because we rent them out every weekend. The guys work a considerable amount of overtime in the summer and the winter. Summer is easier to plan but winter is more unpredictable. Cathy said the rest of the budget is more services and program related. We have the Summer Youth Program that we pay for which is community based for Lower Saucon residents. The enrollment is free through the community center. There is a tot program for younger kids and a program for older kids ages 6-13. In 2015 we budgeted for SE, Town Hall and Polk Valley. Because PVP wasn't completely done, it was eliminated until the park was done. It may be something to consider based on how much it's utilized. It has been discussed to have revenue offset from the parents. There is also the Senior Center. It is held at Seidersville hall that is done through the Community Center too. Leslie said we do charge outside residents \$5 to participate. Minor equipment is purchased under parks such as chainsaws and weed whackers.
- b. **Capital:** This fund is for if there is an expense that is depreciable by 10 years and costs over 25k. For buildings this year, there is 140k which is to do the roof. Roger said this will be contracted. Leslie asked if we are looking to plan to paint for next year. Cathy said if it doesn't happen this year; there will be money there for it next year. We also budgeted for storm water improvements on Black River Rd and Fire Lane. Cathy said with state funds there is a certain percentage you have to keep for equipment and we try to balance between state and capital so the proportion is correct for the piece of equipment that is being used. Charlie asked what some of the great concerns or obstacles are for the Township. Roger said painting is not one of them. His priority is to have the best and well maintained road infrastructure. He would like to see us do a lot more of that. Charlie asked if a 10 man crew is enough. Roger said he could triple the crew and would still have work for them to do. It isn't a matter of finding work but prioritizing work. Charlie asked if there are things that we do here that are out of normal. Roger said absolutely. There are times when the guys can go from operating machines to installing air conditioners. It is broken out in monthly reports.

Charlie asked if Roger comes to council meetings. Roger said no. Charlie asked if he feels that he should. Roger said he is strongly against it. The reason is because you can very much be put on the spot. Not because you're ignorant, but because you may not have all the information available. He doesn't feel it is fair to residents or council. It is better to have the question asked then take the appropriate amount of time to respond with the correct answer. Leslie said she agrees with Roger. She feels giving an off the cuff answer is worse than saying we will get back to you. Roger said they leave no questions unanswered. Charlie said he sometimes feel that council doesn't know everything that is going on and that council tries to answer but may not get it all correctly. Chris said that there isn't a member of the staff that doesn't return an email or phone call with a day to any resident. Leslie said that she agrees and that is why we are here Monday through Friday. We have the resources we need in front of us. At council meetings we don't have that information readily available. Tina said that it might not be a matter of lack of communication, not everyone is going to be happy about the outcome. Charlie asked if there are any obstacles in the way we do the budget. Roger said keeping on track can be

difficult because you have to really follow your goal. There was a period of the downturn in the economy. It was decided to not replace vehicles during that time. Then at the same time, there were 5 trucks needing to be replaced in 2014. That becomes an obstacle because it is out of our control and it depends on what management and council decide on what to do. Cathy addressed a question Charlie had at the last meeting in regards to bridge inspections. She said there was nothing in there for bridge inspections. Roger said we do have a couple bridges and we do need to look into it. He said we used Hanover Engineering the last time. There were a few that needed work and it is completed. It was done in house. There are a few that need additional work. Most are owned by the state or the county so we don't own many.

2. **Zoning:** Cathy said that the newsletter is under planning and zoning but there are discussions about moving some of the expenses. Chris said there is the fixed cost for himself and zoning clerk Molly. The cost for the ZHB members' compensation which is less than 1k. The biggest expenses are the consultations cost such as engineer, planning. Advertising such as running ads for ZHB and meetings. General expenses has \$200 for ongoing training. He would like to move another \$500 to that line. There are a few business licenses for software. Public Works also uses the software as well. Chris does not see anything changing next year. He looks to be more aggressive next year with storm water regulations, DEP, MS-4. We had a general audit 2 months ago to make sure ms4 was compliant. We did well and Hanover engineering handles most of that. That falls under general engineering. Chris is looking to pay Hanover Engineering to add data into the GIS system. It is estimated 3-8k and would bring us up to speed with storm water. Our database is extensive. We have water, sewer, signs, storm structures and roads with parcel information for free from the county. Anything that we own such as improvements becomes ours and this costs money. This is estimated to be about 5-10k. Chris mentioned another mandate that requires sign inventory to be updated. We have a program that we use that was developed is all mobile base. He uses that program for managing inspections and zoning related items. It is all web based and can be pulled up at a council meeting to show residents. To get our GIS system on the web you have to buy server space. However, this is very costly. Our other system allows you to do that. A resident can call in a complaint and it would be directed to the appropriate department. Tina asked if after the system is up to date from Hanover for the GIS system, would they continue or would Chris update it. Chris said it would be a smaller number to do every year plus there is not much more subdivisions being built. He would be able to keep up with it after that point. Charlie asked Chris what obstacles he says in the future or with the budget. He said no, everything is fine as it is now. They are looking at data management because there are a lot of paper files they are looking towards electronic records. Chris said their budget consists of storm water, GIS updated, flood plain management, code part of it which could be changing. There are no big ticket items. Chris said one thing that would save money would be electronic notices as opposed to print notices. Revenue comes from permits and fines every now and then that police department collects under his name. Charlie asked about engineering fees and if we feel Hanover is giving us the best deal. Cathy said rates are going up 2%. Chris said the applicant pays plans and appeals. There are complaints about the cost but nothing is cheap anymore. On some projects we hire them for; we try to keep on top of the charges. They already have plans done and are invested in projects. If a new project does come up, then we would be able to shop around. Chris said we do watch things that we are getting charged for that lets them know we are watching and can't charge or add more on.
3. **Administration:** Leslie went over the compensation for office personnel. There is a budget for advertising and printing. There is a hiring expense under general expense. It is possible that may need to be increased due to a new manager. There is minor equipment purchases needed for things such as filing cabinets. We are moving towards electronic filing but we do still have a decent amount of paperwork. We don't have anything budgeted for training for the executive branch. Leslie would like

to take a look at different policies and procedures. She would like to add a budget for training in human resources and also updating personnel policies. The website is a joint venture between Leslie, Roger and Diane. The website has developed, but there are some restrictions. The website can be simplified. There should be the option for residents to fill out a form online. There will be a cost to do this. Creating of the forms can be done in house; it is the uploading to the website and maintenance of it that will cost money. Things such as pavilion rentals can be completed online. We have credit card payments online for real estate taxes. It is something to consider doing in the future. The audio and visual for council chambers would fall under capital fund. It was state of the art when the building was built but it isn't anymore. Many residents complain that they can't hear council. Also, accessing the web is difficult in council chambers because there is no wireless internet. There is so much available now which could be updated but would be an expense. This would be capital fund. Charlie asked about security measures for council meetings due to an increase of gun violence and shootings at council meetings. Leslie said there were cameras installed as a security measure and there are panic buttons in the council room. Chief said if there is a public meeting, they will have an officer walk through to make their presence known. Chief said one of the reasons the security camera screen is in the lobby is that it hopefully acts as a deterrent. We have taken increased security measures through personnel and electronically. Charlie asked if there was anything major in capital. Cathy said not for this department. Charlie asked if the computer system was adequate. Cathy said we have a strong computer system. We have 4 servers. They all have adequate memory. There is money in the budget just in case a computer crashes. We have Roger and Kal who receive a stipend every year. If they can't solve it, then we call Tech Data Systems. Cathy said the general expenses under the executive may be another one we want to break up. Some of it is part of council's expenses such as going to PSATs, water, coffee and different accessories. It might be something to consider for the next budget.

4. **Police:** The budget supports 23 personnel. 21 are certified officers and 2 are office staff. 15 full time officers and 6 part time officers. We provide around the clock 3 office patrol team coverage in the Township. It is very rare there are less than 3 officers on duty. The budget supports a sergeant, corporal and 1 team leader. There are 4 patrol teams. Sarg is on 1, corp is on 1 and team leader is 1. There is also 1 detective. We also have 1 k9 team that is also part of patrol team. We have a DUI program that provides a DUI checkpoint, cops in shops and roving patrols throughout the year. There is an aggressive driving program as well as a DARE program in the school. There is a crime prevention program set up in neighborhoods. Uniform maintenance and an equipment stipend for the officers exist that are fairly controlled by contracts. The fleet is a major part of the budget. This involves purchasing new cruisers every year. It doesn't take long for cruisers to reach 100k miles. Sometimes only about 2-3 years. This was a target for replacement of them. We are going to increase that to 125k. Tina asked if council feels that the turnover is too quickly. Chief said he was told that at a council meeting they were concerned with how often they replaced them. Tina said you don't want to run into spending more money to maintain them. Chief said that they don't look forward to purchasing a new vehicle; however, they want to be sure that the officer has a top of the line vehicle if he is responding to a call. There are a total of 9 vehicles in the fleet. There is one unmarked vehicle and one low profile cruiser. The rest are marked and 1 is a dedicated K9 vehicle. Other areas of the budget that are typical deal primarily with equipment. Personnel are the primary source of expenditures. Cathy said from her experience, the police department takes an average of their last 3 years. Then if there is a deviation that was to occur they would budget for that. Tina asked about the police contract and what stage they are at. Chief said they just settled on a 3 year contract that will bring them to December 31, 2018. Charlie asked if there was anything on the horizon that could impact police spending. Chief said there is always a potential, but from a major percentage of the budget, we are in a good place. An area that will always significant is remaining in the forefront of technology. We have implanted a license plate reader this year in 2015. Under major equipment for 2016 budget is another license plate reader. Technology will always be important and can become costly at times. Charlie asked about body cameras. Chief said he always has been and always will be a strong proponent of accountability in police work. He isn't opposed to body cameras but would like to see the development of them before making decisions. Charlie asked if we

get reimbursed through Saucon Valley High School for walk throughs. Chief said they aren't required to do them. He said it is a public service. A resource officer is reimbursable through the school district. Special events are a billable item. The budget includes purchase of all new firearms. Charlie asked how Chief communicates with the public whether it is at council meetings or neighborhood watch blocks. Chief said they have a news release policy, our website that provides information and our Facebook page. Cathy said the newsletter that goes out also informs residents of information. Chief is not opposed to council meetings but doesn't feel that it is the most effective or beneficial.

5. **Finance & Other Dept:** Cathy said council compensation will not change. We donate to all the sports groups and to the spirit parade. Lou's compensation, Finance director, finance clerk, real estate tax prep through Berkheimer, and auditing services are under the finance budget. General expenses include GFOA membership, W2 forms and 1099 forms. We pay fees for bank services. Payroll expenses will probably have to increase due to the Affordable Health Care Act. Legal fees are an average of the year before and use the same amount in the baseline. That can change quickly based on need. Office supplies and materials are the same but we usually fall below that budget line. The only thing that will be different for buildings is that the capacity charge for the electric bills. It will increase potentially 60% by 2020. It is starting mid 2016-2020. Our phone system does need to be replaced. Emergency management will stay the same. Charlie asked if we have a system that alerts residents. Cathy said we use Nixle.

6. **Next Meeting:** November 12, 2015 at 4:00 PM

7. **Minute Approval:** Motion to approve July minutes as written

Meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM