



Thursday, January 11, 2024
Lower Saucon Township Council Agenda

6:30 PM
Lower Saucon Township
General Business and Developer
3700 Old Philadelphia Pike
Bethlehem, PA 18015

1. OPENING

- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Pledge of Allegiance
- D. Announcement of Executive Session (if applicable)
- E. Potential Action on Executive Session Issues (if applicable)
- F. Public Comment Procedure

2. PRESENTATIONS/HEARINGS/ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS - None

3. DEVELOPER ITEMS - None

4. TOWNSHIP BUSINESS ITEMS

- A. 2024 Budget Discussion

5. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS ITEMS - None

6. COUNCIL & STAFF REPORTS

- A. Township Manager, Mark Hudson
- B. Council/Jr. Council Member
- C. Solicitor
- D. Engineer

7. PUBLIC COMMENT - NON-AGENDA ITEMS - 5-MINUTE TIME LIMIT

8. ADJOURNMENT

- A. Move to Adjourn

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS

- A. Environmental Advisory Council: January 9, 2024
- B. Council Meeting: January 17, 2024
- C. Landfill Committee Meeting: January 18, 2024 (5:00 p.m.)

D. Saucon Rail Trail Oversight Commission: January 22, 2024 (Upper Saucon Township)

E. Zoning Hearing Board: January 22, 2024

F. Parks and Recreation Board: February 5, 2024

G. Planning Commission: January 25, 2024

1. OPENING**A. CALL TO ORDER**

The Budget Meeting was called to order by Ms. deLeon on January 11, 2024 at 6:38 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL: Priscilla deLeon, President; Laura Ray, Vice-President; Victoria-Ophof-Cordaro, Jason Banonis, Council Members; Mark Freed, Solicitor; Cathy Gorman, Assistant Manager & Director of Finance; Stacy Werkheiser, Administrative Assistant. Thomas Carocci, Council Member – Absent.

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**D. ANNOUNCEMENT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION (IF APPLICABLE)**

Ms. deLeon said Council did meet in Executive Session prior to this evening to discuss several items. One the property acquisition, one Right-to-Know (RTK) case, and a library lawsuit, so Mark could he take over for that. Mr. Freed said thank you. He said the property acquisition matter relates to two properties that are going up for auction from this Board, Council was previously authorized to put a bid in on those properties. What was discussed tonight was getting appraisals of those properties to comply with Second Class Township Code regarding potential purchase of properties. The two litigations relate to the library and they had discussions regarding both the Office of Commonwealth of Libraries (OCL) as well as the RTK proceedings that's in the Court of Common Pleas. Ms. deLeon said okay, any action needed? Mr. Freed said on the appraisal, it would be authorizing the Manager to obtain an appraisal for the two properties that are going up for action.

MOTION BY: Ms. deLeon moved for approval as stated above by the Solicitor.

SECOND BY: Mr. Banonis

ROLL CALL: 4-0 (Mr. Carocci – Absent)

E. POTENTIAL ACTION ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ISSUES (IF APPLICABLE)**F. PUBLIC COMMENT PROCEDURE****2. PUBLIC COMMENT – TOWNSHIP RESIDENT ONLY – 5 MINUTE TIME LIMIT – NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Ms. deLeon said next, we have the public comment procedure. Last meeting for those of you who were here, they passed a new Resolution #31-2024 which now allows 5 minutes of comment and they are opening up each agenda item for their comment. So, as the meeting goes on, the Township Council will talk first, and then we'll discuss things and then they will open it up to public comment prior to their vote.

3. PRESENTATIONS/HEARINGS/ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS – None**4. DEVELOPER ITEMS – None****5. TOWNSHIP BUSINESS ITEMS****A. 2024 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Ms. deLeon said she'd like to read that during the month of January, next following any municipal election the Council may amend the budget and the levy and tax rate to perform with its amended budget. After presentation of the proposed amended budget, the Manager shall see that a notice to the effect that it is available for public inspection at the Township municipal building, be published once in a newspaper of general circulation. Any amended budget must be adopted by the Council or on or before the 15th day of February. No such proposed amendment, amended budget shall be revised upward in the excess of 10% in the aggregate thereof or as to an individual item in excess of 25% of the amount of each individual item in the proposed amended budget. The Manager shall file a copy thereof with the PA Department of Community and Economic Development within 15 days after the adoption of the amended budget as provided by the Second-Class Code. So, since they have newly elected officials, they are amending or opening up the budget for discussion and possible amendment. So, with that, they have their Controller, Lynn Hill here and she's going to give us a presentation, so does she want to start, please.

Ms. Lynn Hill said thank you Priscilla. Thank you, Stacy. Ms. deLeon said is the mic up. Ms. Hill said can you hear her now? She said her and Cathy Gorman put together this overview basically looking at the cash balances that are projected as of the end of 2024.

Mr. Banonis said excuse him, when was this put together as he didn't see this included in his Council packet. Mr. Hudson said it was finished around 5:30 p.m. tonight. Mr. Banonis said okay.

Ms. Hill said there are copies there, aren't there? Mr. Banonis said yes, but this is the first time he's seeing it. Ms. Hill said it should be pretty straight forward. It's based on the numbers from the 2024 budget. There's a few updates because, you know, the budget was prepared ahead of the year-end so there were some transactions in December that changed some of the projected ending balances for 2023. So, these numbers reflect those small changes, but other than that, they are basically the same numbers we saw at budget time.

Ms. Hill said the first page is a summary of the operating budget, the operating fund balance, and the operating savings account. So, coming into the new year, they are roughly \$6.5 million with budgeted revenue of a little over, a littler under \$8.9 million expenses of approximately \$8.7 million and then transfer to Capital, Park and Historic funds \$390,000.00. If you notice they have a small excess of expenses over revenue, \$57,249.00, so that's going to result in support from the fund balance to balance the budget. So, our combined...Mr. Banonis said excuse me one second, she is showing revenue of \$8.9 million. She is showing expenses of \$8.7 million, which would mean that revenue exceeds expenses by \$200,000.00 but yet she is telling them that the combined projected ending balance is going to be less than it was year over year.

Ms. Hill said yes, that's because of the \$390,000.00 that's being transferred to the Capital and Park and Historic Capital funds. Mr. Banonis said so the money is there, it's not being spent, it's just being transferred into a separate account, so they are actually ahead by \$2 million. Ms. Hill said no, these are the same numbers that they went over...Mr. Banonis said you talk about transferring to Capital, Park and Historic, it's simply a balance transfer. Right, it is money that is there that's being transferred. Ms. Hill said that's going to be spent, yes. Mr. Banonis said is it?

Ms. Hill said next slide, please. She said the operational reserve is a separate fund. This is a fund that's been referred to as a rainy day fund or a fund to help balance the budget if they have a shortfall of revenue or something of that nature. Included in that, so they have the projected ending balance of \$6.3 million. They have included an environmental reserve, \$316,270.00. That's money that is set aside for consultants, for when the landfill closes. Is that accurate Cathy?

Mrs. Gorman said that's correct. That was based on Hanover Engineering's estimate as to how much would be needed for post closure expenses. Ms. Hill said right and it's something that they might want to look at in the future if their costs increase, you know, with inflation and so on. The operational reserve is projected to earn interest of \$160,000.00 and they have planned a transfer of \$1 million to the Capital Fund for the Cherrywood paving project.

Mr. Banonis said when that bid came out it wasn't \$1 million for Cherrywood, what was the amount of the bid, Cathy? Mrs. Gorman said it was, she believes, \$370,000.00. Mr. Banonis said \$630,000.00 of that Capital Fund that's being allocated for paving that's not actually going to be used for that paving project, correct? Mrs. Gorman said correct. Mr. Banonis said \$670,000.00. Ms. deLeon said Jason can he keep his questions until the end of her presentation? Mr. Banonis said he wants to ask them while he's...Ms. deLeon said no, at the end he can ask his questions. Proceed please, Lynn.

Ms. Hill said so their projected ending balance in the operational reserve is going to be a little under \$5.8 million and she does realize that things obviously could change during the year with overruns or cost savings in the various projects they have planned in all the Capital Funds. The American Rescue Plan Act Fund (ARPA) going into the new year, they have \$815,000.00 and change and they will be

using \$500,000.00 in Park Capital to go toward the Easton Road Ballfield project so they expect the ending balance to be \$315,611.00 remaining in the ARPA funds.

Ms. Hill said next they have the Open Space Fund, \$11,564,000.00 ending balance of 2023. Interest to be earned during the year they project at \$200,000.00 and the prior year tax revenue because there's a little bit of a lag sometimes with people paying property taxes with the old tax rate that was discontinued but there's still funds coming into this from the .25 mills that had been paid by the residents toward this fund over the years. It was suggested that they would spend \$1,046,000.00 to purchase open space land, to put money, to put land into open space that the residents have and this would include all purchased costs, a little typo there. \$500,000.00 is coming out of this fund to go toward the development of the Easton Road Ballfield and \$75,000.00 is earmarked for open space maintenance on various parcels that they have in the Township for mowing and so forth. So, their projected ending balance would be a little over \$10 million in the open space fund at the end of this year. And, here we have the fire fund; this is one that changed a little bit because of the payment that we did not...Mrs. Gorman said the beginning fund balance in the budget was assumed at a million or a little over a million. It should have been \$1.3 million, which is correct. It's what they are at right now. Ms. Hill said so our fire tax revenue is projected at \$332,000.00; interest income on the fire fund \$50,000.00 and then the budget showed \$705,000.00 earmarked for purchase of equipment, fire truck, and so forth, training simulator, radios. So projected ending balance of \$1,014,000.00.

Ms. Hill said State Liquid Fuel fund going into the year, we have \$1.5 million and then we have some revenue from State Aid, interest on the \$1.5 million, the sale of some used equipment, and so forth, so we've got \$542,880.00 in income coming into that fund. They are expecting \$250,000.00 in payments towards the paver and backhoe from this fund and then \$649,000.00 anticipated other State Aid approved expenses for highways and roads and so forth. Projected ending balance of \$1.1 million and change. Next, we have Park Capital. We have \$439,000.00 coming into the year and money in grants and State funding \$867,000.00 and then we have a few transfers coming in from other funds from the General Fund, from the ARPA, and from the Open Space Fund as was outlined on the previous slides. Town Hall Park improvements \$364,000.00. Polk Valley Trail \$100,000.00. Site changes on projects in process, this would be change orders that they have money reserved for in case of things that come up, such as if the Engineer suggests changes or things of that nature; and then we are expecting with the completion of this project, the remaining amount that would be spent during 2024 would be the \$2.9 million and change. In order for all of this to balance out, they think there may be another \$168,210.00 would be needed to be transferred in to complete all these projects if they all come out to fruition during the year.

Ms. Hill said here we have the Capital Fund of \$4.6 million and change. Grants and State funding \$388,000.00 and we have a couple of transfers, General Fund \$350,000.00 transferring from the Reserve \$1 million. Purchase of police vehicles is \$155,000.00; paver and backhoe which part of that was coming out of the Highway Fund and the rest of it is coming out of Capital \$569,000.00. MS-4 detention basins and the Reading Road culvert \$590,000.00. The paving project for Cherrywood, which as Jason said is probably going to come in well under that. Then we have Seidersville Hall improvements for \$180,000.00. And setting aside the Restricted Funds, our projected ending balance in Capital would be \$2.3 million and change. Historic Capital, a small fund, \$50,000.00 and change going into the year. A grant of \$50,000.00 which she thinks is towards the windows for the Heller...is that correct? Mrs. Gorman said correct. Ms. Hill said the \$50,000.00 grant goes toward the Heller Homestead windows and then a little help from the General Fund of \$20,000.00 which will leave us with an ending balance of \$25,000.00 and change.

Ms. Hill said so here's just a recap of all the funds combined. All the funds that she just mentioned at the beginning of the year total \$33 million and change and then they've got revenue, all of the revenue that it actually does include the General Fund operating revenue, they made a last-minute change to that. So the \$11,525,658.00 is all the revenue coming into the Township from all of the sources, operating revenue, State funding, everything. The total expenses between the General Fund, the Capital, and all the Special Funds, the total is a little over \$17 million, which is really about two years' worth of

operating expenses, so it's quite a sizeable number there; and the sum total of the funds projected at the end of year in accordance with the budget would be \$27 million and change.

Ms. Hill said that's really all she has. Ms. deLeon said okay, thank you. Does Council have any questions?

Mr. Banonis said he does. Ms. deLeon said go ahead. Mr. Banonis said so again, the numbers she has here are misleading in that budgeted revenue exceeded budgeted expenses by \$200,000.00. The amount of \$1 million budgeted for the Cherrywood paving project is \$1 million when the reality of that is it was already bid and approved for \$330,000.00? Mr. Hudson said around \$380,000.00. Mr. Banonis said \$380,000.00 so that's all, that number is off by, so that leaves \$620,000.00 of that, so the reality of this is that the math she is showing them here is off by at least \$820,000.00 because they are not accurately accounting for those things that he talked about. And then she talks about the sum of all funds, that's a meaningful number but Cathy, correct him if he's wrong, those funds are not lumped together. Those funds have very specific purposes. For example, the Open Space Fund is money that was collected through the open space tax that can only be used for open space related items. That's over \$10 million. And then there's also the Fire Services Fund, which is a restricted fund that can be used only for matters relating to our fire services, equipment, training, bid, grant writing and things like that. Is he correct? Mrs. Gorman said correct. Mr. Banonis said what other, what other restricted funds do they have besides those? Mrs. Gorman said State Liquid Fuel funding which is directly related to anything that is Public Works related. Ms. deLeon said she can't hear Cathy. Mr. Banonis said so the State Liquid Fund is related to anything to do with Public Works and there is an allocation for the paver and the backhoe that is going to be funded from the State Liquid Fuel Fund. When is the last time they bought a paver, Cathy? Mrs. Gorman said that paver has got to be 19...Mr. Hudson said it's 20 years old. Mrs. Gorman said it's definitely 20 years old. Mr. Banonis said so that seems to be money well spent because they are investing in a paver that's going to be a piece of equipment that our Public Works will use for a period of 20 years, which will pave our roads and save on the cost of having to hire outside contractors to do that work. How about the backhoe? What's the lifespan of the backhoe? Mrs. Gorman said all of their Public Works' vehicles are inventoried to have a 15-year replacement cycle. Mr. Banonis said so we have that backhoe for 15 years. That seems to be a wise investment. There's money there to pay for that. It's not if that State Liquids Fuel fund money that's going to be used for those two pieces of equipment is a one off. This is something that's going to be used by the Township Public Works for a number of years. Mrs. Gorman said yes. Mr. Banonis said alright, those are his thoughts on what's being proposed here.

Ms. Hill said well these numbers are from the budget. She wasn't, you know, going to put her own spin on it and reduce numbers and so on. This really was derived from the budget that was passed December 6th by the Council majority at that time and she's not meaning to imply that they have the use of this money for anything they want. Obviously, there are restricted funds and that's why she was showing them separately in the previous slides if you were watching. There's a decrease in cash of approximately \$6 million and it may turn out better than that. She certainly hopes so, but she just wanted to make people aware of what the big picture was. What the full picture of our Township finances are. Now if you go back to the second slide, with the operation, there's the operational reserve, that's money they can spend on operational matters and then the previous slide from that is, you know, the operating budget, so those are the monies that are not restricted, is she correct? Mrs. Gorman said correct, yes at this time, yes. Ms. Hill said so just to clarify that for everyone.

Mr. Banonis said let's look at that number. If we look at the projected ending balance 12-31-24, \$5,776,693.00, if you add to that the \$620,000.00 that's not being used for the Cherrywood paving project, that number is actually comes out to be \$6,396,693.00 which is almost \$100,000.00 more than the projected ending balance from 2023, would that be correct? Ms. deLeon said she doesn't think they knew about that number back then when it was passed. Mr. Banonis said what he's talking is hypotheticals now, we are talking about the actual budget, right and we know that number has now been finalized because they bid that number and they know what the bid was and they approved it. Ms. Hill said that's true. Mr. Banonis said so what's being allocated for that is greater than what was needed and

as a result of that and as a result of getting a favorable bid, they are actually going to have an ending balance which is almost \$100,000.00 greater than it was in 2023, is that a fair statement? Ms. Hill said she doesn't know. She's not really following what he is saying Jason, but the \$600,000.00 positive variance he is expecting because of the Cherrywood paving project may be offset by other variances for things that are not in the budget. Mr. Banonis said that's why they have a budget. Ms. Hill said right, it's a budget. This is not...Mr. Banonis said they are talking about, we can only talk about what...Ms. deLeon said okay, stop interrupting Jason, let her finish. Mr. Banonis said he's not interrupting. Ms. deLeon said yes you did. Mr. Banonis said he doesn't think he is, but go ahead. Ms. deLeon said she thinks he is. We can play it back if he wants.

Ms. Hill said this is just based on the budget. It's not, you know, meant to, she's not editorializing or anything like that. Mr. Banonis said he's just talking about...Ms. Hill said something to debate the veracity of, it's just, she's just showing...Ms. Ray said she thinks it was a good recap of the budget because when you look at the whole big giant packet that is out there as part of our packet, it is very confusing. Ms. Hill said yes. Ms. Ray said for people that aren't an accountant to look at, so this does give a nice summary. It splits it out into the different funds. She thinks people have some understanding that certain money can only be spent certain ways and this is a good way to look at it. These numbers weren't made up. They are based on the real budget and part of the budget that they are looking at did include pulling about \$1.75 million out of reserves, she thinks if she remembers.

Ms. Hill said right, and you know, this is an illustration of what was authorized last year and what in this year they've inherited from this budget and what people were willing to spend last year, so hopefully the year will turn out better than what this shows. She certainly will do her part in helping to facilitate a better financial outcome in this Township. So...Mr. Banonis said how are you going to do that? What's her plan for that? Ms. Hill said delving into the expenses and seeing where they can realize cost efficiencies. Mr. Banonis said Cathy, you do that already, right? Mrs. Gorman said ... Ms. Victoria Ophhof-Cordaro said can she be recognized...Mrs. Gorman said the Manager and herself and all of the director's review the budget as to that's needed for the year. Mr. Banonis said great. Ms. Hill said and it's always helpful to have a fresh eye to look at things in a different light.

Ms. deLeon said she would also like to say before she recognizes Victoria that her duties are spelled out very explicitly in the Administrative Code and she's very happy that Ms. Hill works in concert with Cathy in preparing this report and the Manager. So, she thinks they are off to a good start and there's a lot more duties in her job description and maybe he should familiarize himself with the Administrative Code. Victoria. Mr. Banonis said are you talking to him? Ms. deLeon said she doesn't know. He doesn't seem to know her role, so she's just saying that her duties...Mr. Banonis said he never said he never understood her role, Ms. deLeon did. He appreciates her putting those words in his mouth. Ms. deLeon said Victoria.

Ms. Victoria Ophhof-Cordaro said thank you. She appreciates this. She has not seen it until now and for somebody that doesn't have a background in finance, this is very helpful. She can say she was concerned about some of their expenditures that happened or approved expenditures that were approved in 2023 that would be realized in 2024 and looking at the end of the day, the last page speaks to her to see that they are reducing their funds significantly and the revenue is significantly less than what they've budgeted or maybe taking into consideration some of these projects. Some of them are not projects that they would have every year but certainly she doesn't think that it would be wise for them to continue on in the spending. Something else that strikes her is that the budget that was prepared, was prepared in September and October she thinks, and she believes that our former administration was very proud, and rightfully so, that they wanted to have the budget open and transparent for everybody before there was any election because they didn't want somebody after the election to come out and do something without the taxpayers understanding what happens. And she thinks that what they saw was that this budget was proposed by the former administration, and all of the expenditures were proposed by them. And at that time, they didn't touch the millage rates for either the general purpose or for the fire tax. And, they didn't propose any reduction in those things because she thinks they were wise to see that we were spending a lot of money and we needed to be careful. So she thanks Lynn for putting this together for

her and for everybody else to see and she does appreciate that there is a Controller position and that they can see these things at Council.

Mr. Banonis said may he be recognized? Ms. deLeon said sure. Mr. Banonis said so just a couple things. ARPA fund money was free money from the Federal Government as a result of COVID and it had certain restrictions that were placed upon it and then those restrictions were removed that it could be used for a number of categories. There's a deadline to use that money up? When's the deadline Cathy, the end of 2024? Mrs. Gorman said she thinks they extended it. She thinks it has to be earmarked by, to a specific project, by the end of 2024. Mr. Banonis said alright. If we look at the summary that Ms. Hill put together for them, she's factoring in this reduction to include ARPA fund money which they have received for free and for which they are required to spend by a certain deadline. Then she also lumps into this overall \$6 million supposed decrease, a decrease in the Open Space Fund of \$1.5 million. And it says all purchases to be determined, \$1.46 million. He's been on this Council for 4 years now. Priscilla she's been on for almost 40. Ms. deLeon said 36. Mr. Banonis said other than, okay we can agree that 36 is almost 40. Ms. deLeon said no. Mr. Banonis said well then maybe they won't, they'll agree that 36 is 36. So, the only time he can recall that there was \$1 million expenditure, and this again wasn't while he was on Council, for an open space fund purchase was the Polk Valley Park was one, and Woodland Hills was the other. So, he's not aware of any plans to construct or build or purchase some sort of public recreational space that is comparable to Woodland Hills or to Polk Valley Park. Ms. Ray said that's what was in the budget though. Mr. Banonis said so that's a misnomer that they are going to be spending that much money. Then you look at the Fire Fund. There's a decrease in the fire fund of \$350,000.00, which is attributable to the acquisition of fire apparatus and a payment for that. Then you have the decrease of \$400,000.00 in the Liquid Fuels Funds, which is related to the paver and the backhoe which are one-time capital purchases that are going to last them 15 to 20 years. And then...Ms. Ray said and nobody said they weren't, they are just facts in the budget. She's just showing the numbers. Mr. Banonis said he knows, but he's... Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said the numbers that he proposed. Mr. Banonis said President, may he speak without being interrupted. Ms. deLeon said so everybody, let's have one person speak at a time. Mr. Banonis said thank you very much. Ms. deLeon said he's welcome. Mr. Banonis said so then you look at this last page and it double counts these numbers. It doesn't take into account the reality of this so she is suggesting there's almost a \$6 million hole in the budget, which is a complete farce. It's a complete farce that's suggested so they can concoct some sort of tax increase, which is absorb. When you look at the amount of money that is here and you look at how the monies are being allocated and the reality of these funds, it's just wrong and it's misleading to the public. He can't believe that she can sit here with a straight face and suggest to the public that somehow these numbers are justifiable because they are not.

Ms. deLeon said her understanding is they are taken right out of the budget. Ms. Hill said they are taken right out of the budget and this budget was approved last year by the Council majority at the time. She's not doing anything but taking the numbers that are in the approved budget and putting them into an expanded statement of cash balances much like what you would see in the audit report. If you look at the audit reports there's a page in there that shows the net assets of the Township and these will tie to those numbers for the most part. You know auditors always have little changes here and there, but not materially different from what the auditors will come up with, so she suggests you read those when they are out. She means 2023 should be out in what, April or so? Mrs. Gorman said their auditors are finished with their financial statements in June. Ms. Hill said June, okay. And the open space purchases, she's not editorializing. She's not you know passing judgment on any of these, she's just laying the facts out. Ms. deLeon said right, for the budget. Ms. Hill said yes, just showing what's here. Now there are things here that are probably unpopular and you know, might not be necessary. She's not going to name them but she understands that those contracts have already been executed and they probably can't do anything to avoid those particular expenditures and she's not talking about necessary fire equipment and so forth. So, she just really wanted to show the facts as they are and she thinks everybody here understands that or most of us do.

Ms. deLeon said she's going to ask Victoria and Laura for another comment, do they have any questions? Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said no, she just wanted to ask Mrs. Gorman, she has seen this packet or worked

with Lynn? Mrs. Gorman said she did. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said do you find that any of this information is editorializing. Mrs. Gorman said no, this did come from the budget and like they had discussed at budget deliberations, that they do put in for the higher end of probable expenses or possible expenses so they don't have to come back and ask for Council to amend a budget if a property acquisition comes into play or the fire department needs some additional equipment. But the funding is there in the budget line item and that's also one of the reasons why they don't utilize fund balance in their budget process. Ms. deLeon said thanks for verifying that information. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said that's all she has. Ms. deLeon said Laura?

Ms. Ray said no, she thinks she is good. She thinks this is a good, a way to summarize it for the general public and anybody who's not an accountant. These are the numbers. She wondered about that open space number herself when she was sitting out there. Why would they put that much there and had no idea what the plan was or but that wasn't their doing. That is the real number from the budget.

Ms. deLeon said okay, everybody went at least twice, so okay. Lynn, thank you, she really appreciates it. Cathy thanks for working in concert with the Controller, she appreciates it. Mrs. Gorman said she looks forward to working with her. Ms. Hill said likewise. Ms. deLeon said good.

Ms. deLeon said okay, next she's going to call the fire company, she thinks they want to make a presentation. Mr. Banonis said Priscilla are you going to allow the public to speak on that agenda item related to the budget. Ms. deLeon said they aren't getting there yet. They aren't there yet. They are still on the budget.

Ms. deLeon said your names for the record. Scott Krycia said he's the President of Lower Saucon Fire Rescue (LSFR). Ty Johnson said he's Fire Chief of LSFR. Ms. deLeon said welcome. Mr. Krycia said they just put together a little company overview. A lot of you guys probably already know this information but they figured they'd just put it out there for the public just so the public knows what's going on. So, they can just click to the next slide. So, LSFR is the only fire department or company in LST. They are the merged company existing from Se-Wy-Co, Leithsville, Steel City and Southeastern. That process has fully been completed. They operate four fire stations and about 12 pieces of fire apparatus. They also have three social halls, actually four social halls and a social club. That's all that information that's on that slide.

Mr. Krycia said now it's going to be the Chief. Chief Johnson said this slide here is just showing a breakdown of the incidents and the type of responses they do in any given day and throughout the year. This is just a year-end review for 2023. If you have any questions, just let him know. He's not going to read through everything, it's all there. It's all pretty self-explanatory. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said Priscilla, you want questions at the end after the presentation? Ms. deLeon said yes. Chief Johnson said this is showing their increase in calls since they did their operational merge in 2016. As you can see, it's been a steady increase every year to the call volume. They don't anticipate any change in that as far as going backwards. He thinks every year is going to be more and more, unfortunately. This slide is just showing you their monthly call volume. There's really no rhyme or reason for calls. You know, storms dictate you know, if their call volume is more with the exception of the other night they were really surprised, they only had one fire call. Usually, a storm like that they end up with 10 to 20 but they lucked out, which is alright with them. This slide is just showing you the call volume in each individual district. They don't have a slide of the districts up here but basically the Se-Wy-Co is on the southeastern zone, the Leithsville zone and Steel City zone, which is the different zones are different square miles. Off the top of his head, he doesn't know them all as far what the square mileage is. He can tell you that the southeastern zone is the biggest zone at 10 square miles but they can provide that map at a later time and it's been presented before. This slide is showing their responses to different fire departments and each one of these mutual aid responses they also get reciprocated when they have a large-scale incident in the Township. This slide is just showing comparison of other fire departments in the Lehigh Valley. As you can see, they are right up there as the second busiest in the County. This slide is representing the call volume their members run. As you can see, Kyle Mertl, who is one of their

fire captains, he tops the list for the most responses and then the rest is self-explanatory of personnel and how many calls they make. He'll hand you back to the President.

Mr. Krycia said so this is their profit and loss budget category for them, fire income is at the top, you see they achieved 8.3% of their suspected income that they were planning to get for the year. And then other revenue and then their expenses are down below. Right there, see where bereavement is. It actually starts right there. So, you know their bereavement expenses are there and then all of their other fire company expenses are down here. It gives you an idea. Maintenance on the fire trucks is always a good one. You can see a 1611, which is an engine out at Leithsville is \$9,000.00. 1612 which is the Township engine was \$19,000.00. 1614 was \$21,000.00. 21 was \$46,000.00, sorry \$4,600.00. 6131 was \$10,000.00, he's sorry 16. He should have put his glasses on. Anyway, that gives you an idea of where they are. Their biggest expense in the organization is going to be maintenance on the trucks, maintenance on the building and insurance, and equipment. Those are going to be their four big categories for them every year. You can scroll down a little further. This is the rest of the fire trucks. Scroll up a little bit. Thanks, we'll stop it right there, thanks. So some additional expenses are recruitment and retention expenses, supplies for the station, training supplies, uniform for members, utilities for them is always a big one and then the total is down there. So, if you look at the net income in the back on the very bottom there, they actually were ahead by \$3,200.00 which is actually rare for them. He's impressed to see that number, but that's kind of where they are. If you scroll down a little further, so basically the reason they are here tonight is they want to talk about rebuilding their Southeastern Fire Station. The station was built in 1954. It was built like many of their fire stations. It was built in phases, so they built the first building and then they added on and then they got bigger trucks so they added on to the front of it and then they added more bays on and they just kept adding on, adding on. The problem is the current layout of the station and the functionality of the station just doesn't meet their needs right now and especially in the future. When they built fire stations like back in the 50's and 60's, the fire trucks were a lot smaller and now fire trucks are bigger because they carry more equipment. They bring more personnel. They have more water on the trucks than they did in the 50's and 60's. That's why they are really looking towards rebuilding that fire station. They have significant issues there. They have a roof that leaks. They have a basement that, even though they have sump pumps, the basement floods pretty much every time when they get a big storm like this past storm. His members are up there pumping the basement out. They really don't store anything in there anymore because they know it floods but it's one of those things, they've kind of kicked the can down the road on that. They are at the point now, and especially with the new truck coming, that they really need to build a modern sub-station out there at the Southeastern property and that would be the first thing they want to consider doing, starting that process in 2024. Now, they don't have any pricing. They don't have any plans or anything like that. They are just simply letting Council know this is something they are working on, starting the process on. That's why they are here tonight just to fill you in on where they are with the organization, where their responses are with the organization, where some of their financials are, and their goals to start that process. Any questions?

Ms. deLeon said okay, first of all, she'd like to thank all the members that were listed on the page and really thank them for being there for the community and that they really appreciate that. So please pass that on. So she thinks that was a good report and she asked Laura if she had any questions.

Ms. Ray said she doesn't have questions specifically on the report. She doesn't know if they want to go into their other conversations or just on the report. Ms. deLeon said fire company related? Ms. Ray said yes. No, she means for the budget overall. They are just talking about the fire station, she means...Ms. deLeon said right now they are talking about the fire company. Ms. Ray said yes, she understands, she does understand that it makes sense that Southeastern would be their priority to look at. It seems they have a giant pumper truck coming in a couple of years, so she doesn't know how long the process would take to get their building in order out there so they are ready for it. She doesn't think this year would be too soon to start working on that.

Chief Johnson said they did put a Building Committee together at the meeting the other night to start facilitating this process just to start pulling numbers together and see where they are at. They are kicking

around a bunch of ideas to help facilitate it, you know, to fund it. They are still going to need some help. It's part of the bigger plan that was presented at the end of last year. It's just this station has to get done because of the new truck that's coming, it won't fit in the firehouse. They just couldn't build a truck to fit in the firehouse. Ms. Ray said she understands. She's been at Southeastern and she knows what it's like to maneuver through the building there. Mr. Krycia said there's maybe like a foot of clearance between the back of the truck and the back wall of the station, maybe like 2" between the top of the truck and the roof. He gets scared backing it in. It's tight. So there's just no way around it. Ms. deLeon said Jason.

Mr. Banonis said he really doesn't have anything to add to this. He obviously appreciates all you guys have done and continue to do for the Township. He knows these rain storms that they are dealing with were really difficult and it seems we are having a lot of those and they put all their efforts in attending those emergencies that come up as well as the day-to-day accidents and responses that they have to attend to, both within the Township and also out on I-78. They are all volunteers and they really appreciate the time they are putting into this. He's very familiar with the Capital plan. He participated in some of their fire services meetings. Last year they put together a report, which they shared with Council, he thinks it was in September, you know, for long-term vision and he hopes that those who are currently on Council have the fortitude to see it through and not just see it through, but see it through in a timely manner and don't overlook the importance of all this. It's important for the community to have good public safety and it's also important to have a vision for the future so we know where public services like theirs is going. So, he appreciates it. The one question he does have, he guesses, is with regard to Southeastern, what they are proposing, is it a rebuild of the station or is it some modifications that will simply allow for a larger truck to be housed there in the interim with the goal of having the overall centralized fire station, with the satellites, like they had talked about at Se-Wy-Co and Steel City and perhaps out at Southeastern depending how things, how call volumes may change.

Chief Johnson said right, so their thought is to put like a three-bay station out at Southeastern with a lounge, like a kitchen, refrigerator...Mr. Banonis said are you talking about knocking down the existing and building a new one? Chief Johnson said well, so they would take down the Social Hall, have the new fire station built and then when that's done, they would move everything into the new fire station and then they would demolish the old fire station. Mr. Banonis said if he recalls, when they had their discussions, the idea was more to have a centralized fire station in the vicinity of Polk Valley Road because that seems to be the geographic center of the Township and as the population of the Township has developed since the 1800's, the 1900's, when the stations were built. Then to have satellites at Se-Wy-Co as well as Steel City because of their distance from the central station, and then also the possibility of keeping Southeastern as it was or perhaps foregoing Southeastern depending on call volumes and how the Polk Valley location would service it. This seems to be a whole new concept where there's going to be a new station built more immediate to this other plan. He's not reconciling that.

Chief Johnson said so he thinks in the plans it actually shows Southeastern still staying there and yes, he is right. They did talk about the possibility of maybe not doing anything with that station, but this truck that's coming is for that station. So, they don't have much choice. He doesn't know what they could do to get it to fit. The building is like 35' deep. Mr. Banonis said that's why his question was, are they talking about just doing an expansion of an existing bay to facilitate the single truck and the need they have in the short-term with the...it sounds to him like they are hoping to get a new station built out there, which the discussions they had previously were that that station, it wasn't clear if that station was necessarily going to be online in the mid to long term.

Chief Johnson said right, but if you look at the call volume, it warrants it staying there and with the future growth, that's the last frontier of the Township as far as growth, which was discussed in the meetings also. So, it's just they don't have the funds to obviously put in a new station or a central station. They don't even have property yet. You know they are working on some numbers here for this station. You know it might come in at \$800,000.00, maybe it comes in more, maybe it comes in less. They are not looking to spend \$2 million or \$3 million on a firehouse there but if they can do it for the

right price, and make it function for them, they need, they got to start somewhere. And like was discussed in that Capital plan, whatever design it comes up with for this station would also be for the next station, whether it's here or at the Se-Wy-Co lot.

Mr. Banonis said so one of the things they talked about was if getting this centralized station on line and that it would be an asset that's titled and deeded to the Township with the expectation that at a certain point fire services are going to become a paid service by the Township just like police services and everything else. So, what they are proposing here, how does that relate to what they were talking about in terms of ownership? Obviously, LSFR owns the property. There's going to be an ask to fund the structure of the building with taxpayer money, how do they envision that. Chief Johnson said they are looking to possibly subdivide off the property that is there. They own approximately 15 acres. They don't need the whole 15 acres. You know, part of that and grants. You know they are looking to see what grants are out there. So they are not coming to the Council to ask for the full amount of money. You know, they are putting in. As far as ownership of the fire stations and properties, that would be up to the Council if they could come to an agreement and...Mr. Banonis said when he threw that \$800,000.00 to \$1 million price out, he just knows they are spit balling it...Ms. Victoria Opthof-Cordaro said President, could she be recognized at some point. Mr. Banonis said so when they are talking about that figure, that is a figure that's inclusive of State grant money, other funds they may get to construct this, right? Chief Johnson said he means it possibly could be the whole cost of construction. Mr. Banonis said if you don't get any other grant money or anything else, right. Chief Johnson said right. Mr. Banonis said one last question for him. This fire truck that's coming in, it's four years out? Chief Johnson said yes, approximately. Mr. Banonis said so they have four years to design, plan, fund, construct this, right? So this \$800,000.00 or \$1 million or whatever price tag, which they don't know what the price tag is, they don't know what other monies are going to come in, they only got four years, even if the Township had to foot the entire bill, that's \$200,000.00, \$250,000.00 a year, right? Chief Johnson said yes. Mr. Banonis said how much do we bring in fire services tax annually? Mrs. Gorman said currently it's around \$330,000.00. Mr. Banonis said alright. He's not suggesting that there aren't other fire service's needs, okay, he answered his questions.

Ms. deLeon said moving on, Victoria. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said the question, what was the total cost of the pumper truck that they just authorized purchase of? Chief Johnson said do you have that number, Mark? Mr. Hudson said \$1,394,000.00. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said and there was a certain amount that they had to pay at some point like some kind of chassis that was due. Mr. Hudson said Council when they authorized the purchase of the 2028 fire truck, instructed him, instructed Township staff to let Glick know, who is the salesman, that they would take the discount of \$20,000.00, which is for the chassis cost and they pay that 90 days prior to final inspection of the truck. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said and what does the chassis cost? Mr. Hudson said roughly \$680,000.00. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said and the Township authorized 100% purchase as far as the allocation between fire company and the Township, right? Mr. Hudson said correct. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said okay, and on, this is a question for our new Controller, the slide she looked at, the fire fund was helpful for her in thinking about fire. It talks about the fire down payment radios and simulator that it says 705, is that related to the ladder truck. Mr. Hudson said no, that would be if they put a down payment when they were talking about the budget, they didn't know if there was going to be a deposit required next year due to there not being a deposit and being the truck out to four years. The expense that is planned for that line item would be the payment for the 4th payment of the ladder truck, at \$134,000.00. Mrs. Gorman said about that. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said and they have two more payments on the fire truck, the ladder truck she should say. Mr. Hudson said they did 3 of 5 in 2023, so yes, there's 2024 and 2025 yet in payments. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said so, the fire tax revenue is currently at \$332,000.00. Mr. Hudson said yes, approximately, correct. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said okay, and the pumper truck came in at \$1.3, which is greater than what they are projecting to have left in their fire fund even if you accounted for the not having to pay the 705. Mr. Hudson said yes, but the expenses is four years all, so they will make \$1.2 million between now and the time the truck...Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said in four years we'll make \$1.2 million on the current fire tax. Mr. Hudson said yes. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said a couple of questions for the fire company. Their total fundraising, how is their fundraising looking right now? Mr. Krycia said they do a mailer every year. They send it to all the residents in the Township. Their return rate is about 20%, 21%. The marketing

company they use for that actually tells them that's a pretty good number. That equates to usually about \$85,000.00 to maybe \$90,000.00 a year in fundraising from there. Other than that, the rest of the funds they get is basically through their social hall rentals, their club and they do a car show and that's pretty much it. Once in a while they get a donation like here or there, but that's basically it. There's not a lot of fundraising. The reason there's not a lot of fundraising, you'll see like other fire companies they will do pot luck dinners and breakfasts and stuff like that. The reason they don't really do that stuff is because they run almost 900 calls a year. So, they actually run more calls as a volunteer company than some fire companies that actually have paid staffing, 24/7. So, you know, they just don't have the time to do that kind of stuff because they run a lot of fire calls. The Chief will tell you, they are busy. Chief Johnson said take in account training every Monday night and then extra meetings and what not. Then you go to Firefighter 1 Class and it's 190 hours so that's two nights a week and one day on the weekend. So, that's a lot of time for somebody to give up away from their families. So, they are trying to shy away from making hoagies and stuff because one, you know, they are going to run themselves into the ground to make hoagies to pay for a \$1.5 million fire truck. Mr. Krycia said that's a lot of hoagies.

Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said so our, your current budget as it stands, they allocate that money to operating expenses, is that where all that money goes? Mr. Krycia said every cent they make goes to their company in operation expenses, yep. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said okay, so they aren't at this time able to use their fundraising streams to put money into Capital fund for a large purchase of a truck or a building. Mr. Krycia said no. In reality, they typically operate every year either break even or they always operate in a deficit. It depends on the year. It depends on, you know, a lot of factors. Did they get grants or not? Did they get financial help from the Township? Did they have large expenses on apparatus? Did they have maintenance costs? There's a lot of expenses that they have to put through every year and a lot of that changes. He can tell you ten years ago when they were buying turnout gear for their members, it was \$2,400.00 for a jacket and pants for them to go into a fire. That's now \$5,000.00, so they are really strategic with what they need to get done. They use grants that they can keep their stuff upgraded. They are very successful with that, but at the end of the day, there's just not enough, you know, money without dipping into their savings is pretty much how that works. That savings account is slowly getting drawn down, you know, over and over and over. There's just no way around it. If they were a 400 a year call company it would be different, but they are not. They are 868 and they are probably the second busiest company in Northampton County. That says a lot, that really does.

Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said she really appreciates everything that the fire guys do. It is a lot. She appreciates the presentation and she certainly has concerns that we seem to be, we seem to be drawing down our fire fund at a greater rate than what we would be able to replenish it with at our current fire tax rate, especially if we are considering major purchases of more fire trucks and buildings in whatever fashion they may be, whether it's Southeastern or someplace else. She doesn't see right now with what they have, expected to come and with the expenses that they have, that they have enough to cover something to help with the building and just so she's clear, they have the title to this pumper truck that's coming in four years, right? Mr. Krycia said yes, you would own it. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said so it's really our responsibility for us to find it a place to live, and right now, the place that it's supposed to live at Southeastern, is that right? Chief Johnson said correct. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said so she, you know, from her perspective she sees that we have not only the pumper truck expense that they are taking care of, but also dealing with where to house it, a place for it to live in the next four years, so she appreciates everything that they all do; and thank you for serving them and getting all the accreditations and everything that they do. That's all she has.

Ms. deLeon said she'd like to say that she's a little disappointed that they only get 20 some percent back from their fundraising. She thinks that, and she knows they don't like to promote, you need to be promoted more. People need to know what you guys do, that they are volunteers and that their house and lives depend on that. And, she doesn't know if there's somebody out in the audience that's a good writer that would like to publicize what they do and we could be put in newsletters. They could put it on... Mr. Hudson said when they send it, you could like our Facebook page. Ms. deLeon said she knows they put out stuff but there are people that are moving in from the cities that have no clue that they are volunteer. That's bugged her for 36 years. Chief Johnson said the run into that every, just about every

call it seems. Mr. Krycia said yes, that's a problem, he doesn't know what else to do. Ms. deLeon said she thinks they need to be promoted more and hopefully that will help increase that number, the percentage, so, thank you so much for their presentation and with that, they are going to move on, get back to the budget discussion. Chief Johnson said thank you. Ms. deLeon said yes, thank you for coming.

Ms. deLeon said she knows back in December she voted no to the budget because of the slashing, she doesn't know what other word to use, so, what she'd like to do is make a motion to approve the 2024 budget and just so everybody knows that it will be opened to the public for discussion after their motion is made and seconded.

MOTION BY: Ms. deLeon moved to approve the 2024 budget at keeping it at the 5.14 millage rate that it was with the proposed budget, if that was given to us in September/October when it was given to them, and raise the fire tax to .9 mills because they can only do that by, they can only increase it by 25% so that would be the magic number if she's correct.

Mr. Hudson said raise it 2.9 mills. Ms. deLeon said no, what did she say, no, the total millage would be 5.14, and the fire tax would be .9 because they are only allowed to raise it 25% because of the law, and that would leave the general fund at 4.24 mills.

Mr. Banonis said when she says keeping it at 5.14, what is she referring to because the budget that was approved by Council in December of 2023 was not at 5.14, Cathy what was the...Ms. deLeon said she was going to say to amend...Mr. Banonis said hold on, hold on, Cathy what was the...Ms. deLeon said she wasn't finished speaking and her motion was to include and that would amend the December 6, 2023 budget, so that would answer his question. Mr. Banonis said she didn't answer his question, so he'll ask it again. Cathy, what was the millage rate that was approved by Council in December 2023? Mrs. Gorman said it was 4.39 and .75 for fire and 3.6 for general. Mr. Banonis said so, Priscilla what she's proposing is increasing the real estate .75 mills and raising the fire tax .9 mills. Is that what she's doing? Ms. deLeon said bringing the budget back to having it a livable budget to have their expenditures, to help the fire company out and that's her motion on the floor, is there a second?

MOTION BY: Ms. deLeon moved to approve and amend the 2024 budget at keeping it at the 5.14 millage rate that was with the proposed budget, if that was given to us in September/October when it was given to them, and raise the fire tax to .9 mills because they can only do that by, they can only increase it by 25% so that would be the magic number if she's correct and this would amend the December 6, 2023 budget and bring it back to having it a livable budget to have their expenditures, and to help the fire company out.

SECOND BY: Ms. Ophhof-Cordaro

She thinks at least her understanding of what Ms. deLeon said is that when they first saw this budget in October, the proposed budget by the former administration was to have a total millage of 5.14. The budget was based on a millage of 5.14 so all of the approvals by the former administration were again based on 5.14. It wasn't until after the election and then in December, that there was a new proposal to reduce the millage and so what they are asking to do is raise it up to where it was at the time the first budget was proposed back in October and she thinks Ms. deLeon was raising the fire tax up to .9 and the remaining back into the general purpose for a total of 5.14 which is exactly how it was reduced in December, so she does second that. Ms. deLeon said and it wasn't the administration, it was Council. She said it was approved by the administration. Ms. Ophhof-Cordaro said okay, yes, she is right, Priscilla, it was Council that had done that.

Ms. deLeon said with that, she's going to open it up to the public. So, do we have a list? Is this the non-agenda? Mr. Hudson said anyone that wanted to speak they got names with their spellings.

Ms. deLeon said so the first name on the list is as follows:

- Russell Sutton said he's here for non-agenda.

Ms. deLeon said okay, whoever wants to speak on this topic, do they just want to come to the podium.

- Dave Boulin said five minutes, thank you. Thank you Mark, he has met him and welcome aboard and good luck. Speaking about spaghetti numbers, he remembers two people here at a previous Council meeting, not but a couple of months ago, yelling and screaming about doing numbers and what's all this millage stuff up and down. Alright. He would suggest the following. He would like to see when they are going to make proposals and it was clear what was going on here with this up and down of millage tax, he'd like to see those numbers right up there on the screen, so they don't have to guess and remember who said what when. Now, he'll go to, is it free range for him to go where he wants in terms of talking on the budget. Ms. deLeon said this is on the budget, yes on the budget. Mr. Boulin said that's the other thing, by the way, he looked and asked what the blazes what was this new agenda where it's no comment, yet it is some comment, but they don't know what and what on. So, let's start with that and then go to this. Ms. deLeon said would he like her to answer that question. Mr. Boulin said no. Ms. deLeon said okay. Mr. Boulin said she can answer it on her time, he's already a couple of minutes in. Alright, so he would suggest the following. When they put out the agenda, and they say they are going to put out additional information, the old budget which was 23, we know they are going to change it, we don't know what, we really don't know what they are talking about when they flash all these numbers up there. If our new accountant person doesn't have any idea how those numbers came out. Well, I took them from the original. Listen, he can take things from here and stick them there and make them look wonderful. He wants to see a spreadsheet where they came from, and where they are so when they draw a conclusion, stick it up here in front of them and he'll bet you there's not a person in this room if he asked them questions what was shown, could give him the exact data. He wants to look at it. He got notice of this meeting at, it was sent out at 4:15 p.m. on Friday, he got it Monday morning saying we are going to have a budget meeting and there's something about some star comment star. It doesn't say what, when or where. Please listen to him over here, Laura, this is really important. This was her beef when she said she couldn't do the numbers in her head, well guess what, that spreadsheet would help a mile if they really knew where Ms. Hill's numbers were coming from. Okay, and he'd like to see that going forward. No more of this mystical, I got them here and I got them there. He's not saying they are wrong. He's not saying she did it wrong, he wants to see it as he does take his time and go over it. These guys that work roughly 24 days, 8-hour days to give up their time to do all this stuff, absolutely they deserve it, but to him that was a good way just to up the taxes. He'd like to see the numbers. When you do comparisons between the old budget and the new budget, he wants to see two columns so he can say, oh they are going up here and going down there. When you say money is being transferred and it's got a big negative, it's got a negative side for tens of thousands of dollars, and it's only being moved, it's income, it's only being moved from here to here, it's not a loss. You are moving it from one account, yes, it's not a loss. That's a big mistake. Geez, another minute to go. Did the Council discuss this, by the way, and they can answer later on, it would be appreciative, did you guys discuss that, all of you together? Or did a few of you, because they've had since November 7th when the election was over. He finds it really hard to believe they the public have not seen one word about this budget or any details about what they want to change and here we are, just like the library, four years ago, I want you to approve this Council except that Council said no, they haven't seen it. If he understood right, one of the Council members just saw some of the things that were shown here tonight and all the rest of you had. How does that work? Well, you can answer that amongst yourselves. That's wrong and not only that, he the public hasn't seen even a, that brochure, that condensed all that stuff. Nothing, and here it is, you just voted on it, you're gonna make it, he thinks it's criminal. Really, this is the new transparency, he doesn't think so. And he hopes they all discussed it and by the way, he does have one question to Mark. He really didn't hear what he said about the lawsuits, there were two of them and he'd like to have some more information. He just heard HAL and two lawsuits, and doesn't know what was said there. Mr. Freed said so, what he was doing was describing what was discussed in Executive Session amongst the board and in Executive Session's you can discuss a number of things including legal issues, property purchase, so he described the property purchase. Mr. Boulin's question was about the litigation. Mr. Boulin said that's correct.

Mr. Freed said so the two litigations that they discussed both relate to the library. There's two pending litigations. One is on appeal to Commonwealth Court and one is pending in front of the Court of Common Pleas and they just discussed issues and strategy related to that. Mr. Boulin said okay, can he give an update where they sit? Mr. Freed said there are proceedings scheduled in the Court of Common Pleas. Let him start with Commonwealth Court, that's pending, he believes there's motions pending with the Court. There was a recent amendment by the library where the State, to one of the motions, that there's going to be a response due at the end of the month. Then on the other one, on the RTK case that's pending in the Court of Common Pleas, there is trial dates that are coming up as well as motion dates. Mr. Boulin said and where do they sit? Mr. Freed said what does he mean, where do we sit? Mr. Boulin said we are part of it? Mr. Freed said he's sorry. Mr. Boulin said the Township is part of the... Mr. Freed said correct, the Township is part of the cases. Mr. Boulin said where do they sit. Mr. Freed said that's what he's discussing with Council in Executive Session. Mr. Boulin said thank you very much. Ms. deLeon said he wasn't here at the Reorganization meeting, but they did pass a new resolution 31-2024 which allows a 5-minute talk period and it also allows that on each agenda item they open it up for public comment. So, they don't do a, she doesn't know if he's aware of that or not. Mr. Boulin said he just got it and he was hoping they post it, and he asked if he could get a copy of that and that would be another thing. If you change a resolution, it would be very helpful if they would post those so they can see them. Ms. deLeon said it is posted. If you go to the website, it's posted. Mr. Boulin said he just found that out. Ms. deLeon said yes, and it's been there since the next day. The staff was very quick in getting it up there. That would have been January 4th, no January 3rd. As she read in the beginning of the meeting, which she believes he was here for, she read him out of our administrative code that newly elected Council can amend the budget, so they voted at the last meeting to have this on the agenda, have a special meeting for tonight, and the budget was attached and they all looked at it. They didn't know, you know, anybody can make a motion to come up with an amount with the tax millage rate and her proposal would be the 5.14 millage total and the general would be the 4.24 and the fire tax would be raised to .9. She had voted no to every budget that has lowered the fire tax. The fire tax should have never been decreased. They've lost how much money, Cathy? Like \$300,000.00 since... Mrs. Gorman said from where they were at a mill, it's around \$120,000.00, \$127,000.00 when they lowered it to .75. Ms. deLeon said and she was just totally upset over that and she had voted not to all of the budgets. She wants to restore that tonight and that's what the motion is all about.

Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said she also wants to indicate she had not seen Ms. Hill's presentation. Ms. deLeon said she didn't see the fire company. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said they are sitting here just like him, seeing the presentation for the first time. She thinks it would be nice if they had, so everybody could see, the millage that was proposed in October was a total of 5.14. That's what they have paid in 2023. So, she is not proposing they raise taxes at any way shape or form. What they are doing is aligning the millage, as least she sees the promotion that they are aligning the millage to reflect how the former administration prepared their budget because they prepared a budget based on 5.14. So... Mr. Boulin said he'd just like to see those columns that show. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said that's great. Mr. Boulin said he doesn't think it's great, he thinks it's mandatory. Mr. Freed said so this is just for some clarity, this is the beginning of the process under the Township Code and under the Second-Class Township Code, which are very similar to each other. This is the beginning of the process. Once the proposed amendment, if it passes, and there's a direction to staff to prepare the documents, they will be available for review for at least 10 days so they will have an opportunity to be able to review them. Mr. Boulin said correct him if he's wrong, but if you vote for it, and you vote for it, and she votes for it, it will pass. Ms. deLeon said majority rules. Mr. Boulin said he agrees. Mr. Freed said this is the beginning of the process, what they are voting on tonight is to authorize staff to prepare it so that it can be reviewed by the public. Ms. deLeon said if it passes. Mr. Freed said they will have an opportunity. There will be another vote to actually pass it. Mr. Boulin said good. If you aren't putting to pass it, they are voting to make it known and prepare... Mr. Freed said to authorize the preparation of revision to the budget. Mr. Hudson said staff will prepare, if the motion passes, staff will prepare and update the budget and have a budget on the agenda for the 17th which is next Wednesday with the new numbers. At

that time, staff, if Council decides to pass the budget then, then they would advertise it for 10 days so that would be the, he calls it the...Mr. Boulin said so it should show on the agenda there will be a motion to whatever, with the associated data so people can look at it and understand it. Mr. Hudson said correct. Mr. Boulin said he doesn't think that's hard, just another page on a billion-dollar web. Thank you. Ms. deLeon said and that was part of her statement in the beginning reading right out of their Administrative Code what they are doing tonight. Mr. Boulin said he actually read that tonight. Ms. deLeon said you read the Administrative Code. Mr. Boulin said yes. Ms. deLeon said it's a good document. Thank you for reading it. Mr. Boulin said he probably spends at much time as most of them. Ms. deLeon said great.

- John Blair said LST, he'll keep this pretty quick. He has two questions that just sort of jumped out at him. Well, third it is very hard to read the screen. He understands they have it on line, but when they are going through the fire budget and so forth, he can't see them and he has glasses, but nonetheless. Two questions he has in no particular order. When Jason brought up about Cherrywood and we had a million-dollar budget to pave and it came in at \$400,000.00, that's a \$600,000.00 difference and the board, everybody just sort of like went right by it and we're talking about, that's a big number, \$600,000.00 and everybody just sort of, oh, and they are passing a budget and they are missing, what's our total budget. Mrs. Gorman said she has...Mr. Banonis said so the projected ending balance was \$6.3 million or \$620,000.00...Mr. Blair said 10% of the budget, everybody just went, oh don't worry about it. That's 10% of the budget. You got Cherrywood up there on the map, that one he did see, a million dollars. They were in bigger letters, a million dollars and she's saying that we bid it for \$380,000.00 and everybody just went, oh let it go and they are going to pass a budget and they missed 10% that they didn't even stop and go, let's correct it. So, he's confused. How do they rely upon the board, every one of you, to...Ms. Ray said this was from the budget that the prior Council...Ms. deLeon said let him have his five minutes. Let him have his five minutes. Mr. Blair said picking prior or present. He's picking, no, he is picking the present board, this is the board that's going to vote on it. Can't do anything with the prior, that's long gone. They just said 10% of the budget, like oh, no big deal, where the hell does that eraser go. \$600,000.00 and they didn't discuss it further, like let's redo the budget and wait until next week and we'll redo it. He has no problem with their budget, but geez oh whiz, to walk away from 10% of it and act like it's nothing, so that upset him. The other thing that upset him is, he's not picking on anybody, he's just simply saying, how do you buy a 5-year, 6-year made fire engine and you don't have a building to put it in. Wouldn't somebody have thought if they are going to spend \$1.7 million for a fire engine, we need a \$250,000.00 bump out at Southeastern to park it in? If he came home with a Suburban, his wife said, where are you going to park it. They only have a single car garage. She'd be pretty irritated with him. How do you buy a fire engine and you don't know where it's going. That should have been done when the fire engine was done. If the fire engine was \$1.5 million, you budget \$1.7 million because you have to add \$250,000.00 for a bay to put the fire engine in. And now we're dealing with it now. It doesn't look good. He's not picking the prior or the past, it's embarrassing. You should have known where you are going to put the fire engine, and you don't need to spend a million dollars, put a \$150,000.00 addition, poke it in there until you find out your overall fire department plan. Thank you. Ms. deLeon said well, he wasn't here for when they had the discussion on the fire truck. Had he been here he would have known that it's going to take at least four years for it to come in...Mr. Hudson said four years. Ms. deLeon said four years and during that time period, they were going to address where it was going to sit. So, that was...Mr. Blair said so you should have allocated a credit or something...Ms. deLeon said it's in the fire tax, it's in there, okay. The other issue he brought up, it just left her. Mr. Blair said Cherrywood. Ms. deLeon said Cherrywood, that was addressed last year in December, she believes the bids came in. Mr. Hudson said December 20th. Ms. deLeon said December 20th at a special meeting called by Council, and they came in. They had no idea what they were going to come in at. The budget for 2024 was already passed in December, on December 2nd, December 6th which she voted no to. Okay, so, she didn't do that, a previous Council did that, voted to that and didn't even know what that number was going to be, but it's in the 2024 budget. So tonight, tonight they are not going through item by item, by line item. They are going the total number of the millage. As they go into the year, they have a good Manager, they have a good director of, she always forgets her title. Director of Treasure, Finance Director, sorry Cathy. And

they will work together and with our new Controller to try to bring everything down and if they...Mr. Blair said he doesn't disagree that everybody is trying to do a good job, but when you have a \$600,000.00 number, maybe you'll make a decision on your vote, whether they need to add taxes to our revenue. You might say, you know what, we didn't realize it's not going to be a million, it's only going to be \$400,000.00, we don't need to add any taxes currently. Maybe next year is a different story. He's just thinking about today. Ms. deLeon said thank you.

Ms. deLeon said who wants to go next? She has some names on here. She doesn't know if they want to talk non-agenda. Okay.

- Hi, Margaret Segaline, resident of LST. She just wants to say that she thinks that there are many ways to raise funds and she wasn't aware of some things before tonight about the fundraising efforts that were already taking place at the fire department. She thinks if more residents were aware of what fundraising efforts were being done, that more people would contribute and pitch in. She does think it is the communication issue and that's usually the issue. How many, we have what, 10 or 12,000 residents, no...Ms. deLeon said 11,000 residents in our Township. Ms. Segaline said how many? Ms. deLeon said 11. Ms. Segaline said 11. If 11,000 people contributed \$10, that's \$110,000.00 you know. It's not, we're not talking about large numbers so she just wants to say that if they take every avenue of social, she's losing her train of thought. The whole point is they need to communicate it to the public and then everybody will know what options they have to help because now not everybody can be a fire fighter but there are so many ways that they can help. So, going forward, she just wanted to say, she's definitely going to be doing things herself that she can do to help.
- Mark Ozimek said so plain and simple, what they are putting forth here tonight, is to restore what the last Council did when they reduced the millage. Right? Ms. deLeon said pretty much. Mr. Ozimek said no more, no less. Whatever way they divide up the money, that's between wherever it needs to be. So, our tax base is going to be back where it was last year. Ms. deLeon said with more money going to the fire company. Ms. Ray said actually the last three years it's been at that same total, 5.14. Mr. Ozimek said theoretically there's no increase in taxes. Ms. Ray said no, there is not, reality or theory. Mr. Banonis said that's not a correct statement sir because what they are proposing is they are restoring the tax back to where the original proposed tax was, never approved by Council, and then they are also increasing another tax. So, they are not telling him the truth. Mr. Ozimek said that's okay, but he doesn't buy Mr. Banonis opinion. Mr. Banonis said he's not offering opinion, Sir. Mr. Ozimek said let's jump onto this. Number 2...Ms. deLeon said you have to address the Chair please. Mr. Ozimek said as far as the new fire engine, okay, what fire station is the most centrally located fire station in the Township now? Ms. deLeon said we'll ask Mark, which one. Mr. Hudson said from the call volume the fire house here gets the most calls. Southeastern gets the second most calls. From the study they did, Polk Valley Road area is what they've considered the center of the Township so the closest to that is Leithsville. Mr. Ozimek said okay, now will that new fire truck fit in the Leithsville station? Mr. Hudson said it is his understanding that it will. Mr. Ozimek said okay, so if things are supposedly tight on money, until Southeastern can be revamped as he knows the fire stations. He runs the election polls over there the last couple of years. He can see how tight the fire engines are. There is no room over there, and he agrees with them. If the roof leaks and the basement leaks, it needs to be repaired because leaking only causes more damage. Would it be possible to swap one fire truck here to put the new one over at Leithsville, and in the meantime, they can address the building issue instead of trying to pay for the new fire truck, and at the same time, well which would really be at the same time, address the issues with the fire company, with the firehouse. Mr. Banonis asked if he was on the fire company. Mr. Ozimek said what? Mr. Banonis said are you on the fire company. Maybe he should be as that's a bright idea. Mr. Ozimek said oh my God, give me heart failure. Ms. deLeon said first of all, she didn't want to interrupt, she's sorry. Mr. Ozimek said go ahead. Ms. deLeon said they have a new fire company liaison so Victoria and Laura are now on the Fire Services Committee and they can bring those ideas back to the next meeting and talk about them.

Ms. Ophhof-Cordaro said she just wants to add her comments about the fire service tax and where that stood. Her concern is overall that they seem to have a lot of capital improvements that they are going to need and they aren't funding our fire tax appropriately to account for those needs, so she doesn't know if the fire company is able to answer the question but she doesn't want to put them on the spot either, but she thinks the question is a very good one. It is something they can bring to the fire company and see about moving fire trucks around and whether that's appropriate given the type of fire calls and the location of the people. There's a lot of factors but she doesn't want to speak for the fire company on that and she doesn't want to put them on the spot unless they feel they can answer it. He wants to answer she thinks.

Chief Johnson said so, he means everything that was said here, they thought of already. They have a tanker out at Leithsville. That truck is bigger than the one that's being purchased. So, it won't fit out at Southeastern. The only truck in their fleet that will fit in the Southeastern firehouse, besides the two trucks that are stationed out there now, is an engine that sits down here at Se-Wy-Co. This past summer their tanker was out of service. It had a cracked tank. The engine out at Southeastern also had to go out for service. That left no engine out at Southeastern. They had to move the engine out of Se-Wy-Co out to Southeastern. That truck barely fit. The guys had to open the garage door, walk around the front of the truck, to get into the driver's seat. Now, he understands Mr. Blair's concern also, they can't build fire trucks like they used to build fire trucks. The tanker that sits out at Southeastern is 32' long. The new tanker is 34' and change. He thinks 34'6", somewhere give or take a few inches. It was part of the Fire Committee's discussion about buying a tanker so it was brought to them they should spec a tanker and that's what they did. Could they put it at Leithsville? Absolutely but then they won't have a tanker out at Southeastern where they have one hydrant in that whole 10 square miles. So you know, they play devil's advocate on themselves as far as protection of the community. They spend a lot of their time and effort into public service in the Township. So, if anybody has ideas, they are more than welcome to give them to them instead of berating them in front of everybody. But this is where they are at now. You know, he's not sure where all the funding is going to be coming from. That's why they are here. They were asked to put a presentation together and that's what they did, so you know.

Mr. Banonis said let's go back to Mr. Blair's comments about ordering the fire truck. He thinks it's a valid point. He means they asked Council to approve a fire truck, did they know before they came before Council for this fire truck, that it wouldn't fit in the space they intended it; and if they didn't, did they measure and consider that. Chief Johnson said they did measure the firehouse. Mr. Banonis said so they knew then before they came before this Council and they didn't tell them it wasn't going to fit in that space. Chief Johnson said he's pretty sure it was discussed and they were asked to spec a truck and that's what they did. He tried to get a truck to fit in that firehouse. They can't do it anymore, so if they are adding a bay, then they are adding a bay. Mr. Banonis said did he tell Council then it was going to cost us an additional hundreds of thousands of dollars or a million dollars for the new firehouse to be built to accommodate the new toy. Chief Johnson said well, it's not a toy. Mr. Banonis said fire truck, fire truck, his bad. Chief Johnson said Mr. Banonis sat in some of those meetings too, Jason and it was discussed. Mr. Banonis said not when that was discussed, he'll tell him that. Chief Johnson said he wasn't at every meeting but...Ms. Ophhof-Cordaro said she just wants to say that she really appreciates our firemen and she don't want to have anyone interrogate them. They spend so many hours, so many hours answering fire calls for free, and she personally am sorry that he's been put on the spot. She didn't want to make them be put on the spot for sure and she would respectfully request that they not interrogate him.

Mr. Banonis said he's just asking questions that the public asked. He thinks they are valid questions. Chief Johnson said he doesn't have an honest answer for him. It was discussed and like he said they were asked to put a spec together and that's what they did. Is there ways they could make it work? Maybe, they'd have to configure some things but that station was on the report about replacing. He doesn't have the report right in front of him, it's out in his truck, but either way they need to start moving forward and replacing firehouses. They are obsolete. They have mold in them, they leak and part of the problem is the guys before them concentrated on having the

right fire apparatus for the Township and the calls that are run in the Township. And they are outgrowing those firehouses and you know the money was put into life safety equipment and not the stations so you know, they are in a bad spot here.

Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said thank you very, very, very much. Ms. deLeon said thank you. Mr. Banonis said thank you Chief.

Ms. deLeon said Mark. Mr. Ozimek said he didn't say anything that he said to berate the fire company. Ms. deLeon said Mark, they can't hear him. Mr. Ozimek said he didn't say anything like to make you guys look bad. He just came up with an idea, it was a thought. And it was a thought because he'd like to see them get Southeastern fixed up because it needs fixed up. He knows that. He's in the building twice a year. So, as far as when you guys were here, when the fire company was here, asking for the fire truck, he thinks some of those things were addressed. And just like normal, he's not going to say it because then he'll start an argument but, you know, the guy that did do a lot of the fire company meetings isn't here. He ain't at this meeting. He ain't at the last meeting. And as far as he's concerned, when he misses a third one, he should be booted, permanently. Is he correct in saying there's a total of basically \$9 million in the fund. Ms. deLeon said in which fund. Mr. Ozimek and any fund, together, added together, separately, he doesn't care how you look at it.

Ms. deLeon said they have open space money, they have, go ahead Cathy. Mrs. Gorman said as of right now, they have \$14 million in general and \$14 million in... Ms. deLeon said she can't hear her. Mrs. Gorman said they have \$14 million in general and \$14 million in open space and \$5 million to \$6 million in their capital funds. Mr. Ozimek said that's great. That's absolutely great. And as far as giving money back to people, he doesn't think they should. He doesn't know if this is Mark Freed, the attorney. Is the Township capable, legally to take some of that money and put it in some sort of investment account so that it brings back some kind of return, like his retirement account. Mr. Freed said he's sure that the Township has money in interest-bearing accounts of different kinds. Mrs. Gorman said they are all interest-bearing and the Second-Class Township Code provides for any municipality to have an operational reserve fund for the event of revenue shortfalls in the future and to stabilize the tax base of the community. Mr. Ozimek said good. So, over time, they already ordered the fire truck, you take care of the fire truck and for a temporary situation if fire trucks need to be moved around, until Southeastern is repaired then so be it. If you get a call and you have to run that fire truck from here to the other side of town and you need it, then that's what you got to do. But he's not sitting up here berating the fire company because they deserve whatever they need to solve Township problems when there's an issue. Ms. deLeon said thank you Mark.

- Russ Sutton said he didn't realize how much their fire apparatus actually, their uniforms cost. They almost doubled and they can anticipate everything going up, not going down. So the fire tax should increase appropriately because that's what saves our lives, not ballfields, not parks. The other Council spent a lot of money on ballfields and parks and they don't save people's lives. He knows about this because he was an Advanced Life Instructor for over 30 years. He gives these guys credit. They are volunteers. They do it all on their own and they work very hard for what they do and he noticed even on his street, he called them and there was a two-minute time lapse from the time he called them to the time they arrived and he was very impressed with that. That never happened before, so his hat is off to them. They really did a great job and our volunteers do a great job. Without our volunteers, they are sunk. This is a matter of life and death. It's not a matter of parks or recreation or things that are not necessary. This is a necessary thing that we need for our own well-being so he really thinks we should, if we're not raising it that much, how many mills are we raising the fire tax. Ms. deLeon said it went from .75 proposed in her motion to .9. Mr. Sutton said .9. So the individual person approximately what kind of cost would that entail. It's nominal. It's nominal. It's like a meal out and they are not willing to give this to the fire company to let them protect our lives. He thinks we should set our priorities straight. This is a life and death situation that we actually need control of and we should support our fire company fully. Ms. deLeon said thank you.

Mr. Banonis said Chief Johnson he wants to just ask him a question, not to put him on the spot again, but prior Council purchased a ladder truck for the fire services. Prior Council helped to facilitate the consolidation of all of the fire departments into one including Steel City Fire Company. Prior Council authorized the purchase of the new pumper truck. Prior Council authorized the payment for air packs, improvements to four of the fire stations. What else did they provide because there's a suggestion here that they are somehow shortchanging fire services and they've actually authorized millions of dollars toward fire services including apparatus, grant writing, and other things, right? Chief Johnson said yes. The other thing was radios. They got a grant for radios, with a total cost was about \$580,000.00. Mr. Banonis said they helped subsidized that. Chief Johnson said correct. Mr. Banonis said thank you. He just wanted to clarify that for people who may not have been here for all these meetings to see all the things that they have done because the suggestion is that somehow, they are shortchanging fire services and putting lives in jeopardy which was never, ever the case, was it? Ms. deLeon said she'd just like to go on the record as... Mr. Banonis said hold on, he wants to hear his answer. Ms. deLeon said excuse me. Mr. Banonis said he didn't hear his answer. He asked a question and he'd like to hear his answer before she interrupted him. Ms. deLeon said he is interrupting the Chair by the way. Mr. Banonis said go ahead, Chief. Chief Johnson said they are not here saying that the Council never backed them. Mr. Banonis said they are the ones who actually came up with the idea for the central fire station, met, put a plan together, and actually presented it to Council to get that ball rolling, right? Chief Johnson said correct. Mr. Banonis said thank you, alright, that's all. Chief Johnson said they were just asked to give a report and they are looking to continue backing, that's what they are here for. Ms. deLeon said she's sorry. Thank you again.

- Monica Willard said she thinks they have just seen a wonderful demonstration of everybody wanting to support the fire department and she thinks so much is, well I did this and we are doing this, and whatever, we have to change the tenure of the conversation at these meetings and we have to keep the time so that when we come to hear the agenda and the important things, that they get addressed and to get petty about the fire trucks when no one seemed to address a \$4 million, or \$2 million or \$3 million ballpark. She thinks it is just awful that they are talking pennies for fires and hundreds of thousands of dollars for a limited use ballfield. So, she just would like to go on record saying thank you for bringing the mills to a realistic, planned position that they were in, in October, of last year when it was not frivolously put in to just cut at any cost to put in the word cut and she just hopes and prays that they find the way to work together and to truly praise the fine work of the Council's past, long-past, immediate-past, and where they are going in the future and where they change the tone of conversation.

Ms. deLeon said thank you. Anyone else? Okay, so back to Council, there's a motion on the floor. Would there be any other discussion.

Mr. Banonis said he does, he has discussion about it. May he be recognized? Ms. deLeon said sure. Mr. Banonis said so what they are proposing here after a finding of \$620,000.00 in savings, and they are using fire savings as a red herring to justify this and one other point that he would make is Steel City really did not have adequate fire coverage until the merger took place and LSFR took over, so they appreciate that because the response time has dropped precipitously and the services have been a lot better in Steel City. He thanked them for that. Back to his point though about what they are proposing here, what they are proposing here is they are increasing the taxes a total of .9 mills, and one of the residents suggested that what they are being asked to provide is pennies. This is not pennies that is being provided, so let's put some perspective on this. Mark Hudson, what's that? Mr. Hudson said they are proposing .75. Mr. Banonis said .75, .75 and his understanding is they are proposing .75 for the general and .15 for the fire services for a total of .9, is that correct? Mr. Hudson said he didn't understand it that way. He understood that the fire was going to go up .15. Mr. Banonis said and the general was going to go from 4.39 to 5.14, right? Mr. Hudson said no. Ms. Ray said a total of both combined. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said it's a total of .75, .5 in general... Mr. Banonis said Mark could he tell him what he is understanding so he has an understanding of this. Mr. Hudson said so, let's go back. Currently the fire tax is .75 and it's his understanding they are requesting to raise that .15 so it will be

0.9. Mr. Banonis said right. Ms. deLeon said and that's within the 25%. Mr. Hudson said he was working those numbers. Ms. deLeon said sorry. Mr. Hudson said the general fund when they passed the budget in December, the general fund millage was 3.64 and they are going to raise that .6 to bring that to 4.24 mills. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said Mark what was the general-purpose mill proposed in the budget in October. Mrs. Gorman said 4.39. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said so 4.39 was proposed in October. It went down to 3.64 and it's up to...Mr. Banonis said he's not done, he still has the floor or is he being removed from having the floor, Priscilla. May he have the floor? Ms. deLeon said sure he may. Mr. Banonis said thank you. So, what's being proposed here is increasing the taxes .75 and if he understands correctly Mark, 1 mill represents \$100.00 for every \$100,000.00 of property value, is that correct? Mr. Hudson said yes. Mr. Banonis said alright, so and he recalls from their prior discussions, when they were talking about the savings to taxpayers from the new Host Municipal Agreement with the landfill, the average home value in LST was \$500,000.00. So if the average home value in LST is \$500,000.00 and granted there are some that are worth more and some that are worth less, much less, some worth much more. If the average home value in LST is \$500,000.00, and you multiply that by .75 mill, that comes out to \$350.00. So every resident, on average, is going to be asked to fork over an extra \$350.00 when the Township itself is sitting on more than \$9 million in reserves. Reserves that are available for funding anything to do with the Township. He's not talking about open space money, and not talking about fire services money, but just \$9 million plus of reserves and they want to take more of your money. That's what they want to do. So their first order of business as new Council is to raise your taxes.

Ms. deLeon said no, the first order of business was at their Reorganization meeting, where they did a lot. So okay, Laura did she have anything else to comment on? Ms. Ray said she's going to say they are not raising taxes. The combined total will still be what they've had for the past three full years, it's the same total millage. It's just they are dividing it up differently, they are moving a little bit over more to the fire tax as much as they can, which was only 25%. So that's like what they are limited to, and then the other one, the general-purpose tax millage comes down a little, but combined it's 5.14 mills, which is the same rate it's been for the last three years. A lot of word twisting going on up here.

Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said thank you. She appreciates all the discussion. She appreciates all of the comments. She thinks there were some very good ones. And, she wants to say that she thinks it's appropriate to keep their millage where it was because everybody knows everything costs more money. Fire trucks cost more money, fire buildings cost more money, but everything in the Township costs more money and to be in a position where they are balancing their budget by using reserves, which is what they did, she doesn't think is financially, fiscally responsible. She thinks they should live within the budget. They should tax accordingly so they can pay for their bills without drawing down the reserves, which are meant for emergency purposes or for large capital improvements or one-time costs. They are not meant to balance a budget like this especially when they had a proposal not to reduce the millage in October, so she thinks the motion is great. She seconded the motion and that's where she stands and she appreciates everybody's input. Ms. deLeon said right, and she appreciates everybody's comments and with that, she's going to ask for a roll call, please.

ROLL CALL: 3-1-0 (Mr. Banonis – No; Mr. Carocci – Absent)

Ms. deLeon said do they need another motion to direct the staff to...Mr. Hudson said they will prepare everything and get ready for the 17th. Ms. deLeon said the 17th. So next meeting will be January 17th. Have the record reflect that at 8:35 p.m. Mr. Banonis has left the meeting. So, January 17th, this will be on. Do you want to explain the process again for everybody in case...Mr. Hudson said so this is Council directing staff how to prepare the budget for the next meeting where they will tentatively approve the budget, then it will be advertised for 10 days and then the final approval would be the February 7th, so it will be advertised for more than 10 days. Ms. deLeon said okay and this will be on line for people to look at then also. Mr. Hudson said yes. Ms. deLeon said okay, she thinks they did it. So, thank you to everybody, thank you Cathy, thank you Mark, and Lynn for doing what they did for the preparation for tonight. So, she guesses they will move on to Miscellaneous Items.

6. COUNCIL AND STAFF REPORTS**A. TOWNSHIP MANAGER – Mark Hudson**

- He said just they still have Christmas tree collection going on this weekend, so if anyone still has a Christmas tree that they are looking to get rid of or recycle, they can drop it off at the yard waste center on Polk Valley Road this Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. He forgot his paper, that's it.

B. COUNCIL AND STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Banonis – No report, left the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Mr. Carocci - Absent

Ms. Ray

- She said she guesses she can give a short little report. She did attend LST Historical Society meeting last night. So one of the items that was discussed there that they made a motion on was regarding the sign that goes out in front of the Lutz-Franklin Schoolhouse. So, like the other signs that kind of disappeared over the years because it rotted away or something. Ms. deLeon said is she talking about those green signs with their name on it, like that sign? Ms. Ray said yes, like the regular park sign. So, they don't have a park sign currently. She doesn't remember, it's been gone for quite a while apparently, so it shows how much she pays attention when she drives by there. She just knows it's the Lutz-Franklin Schoolhouse but the signs gone, so they do, they are interested in having a new sign. They had wording that they would like on it. They'd like to have it acknowledge that it's a national historic registered site, but they don't need the thing where you can slide in the lettering. Ms. deLeon said they do have their bronze plaque there. Ms. Ray said yes they do, but you can't, you have to actually get out of your car, walk up, and look at it. So, they'd like a sign. They don't need the thing where you put the lettering in because nobody was ever available to do that part. So, she just wanted to mention that. She knows Karen was going to send in a letter about that to Mark, so wherever that goes in our, whatever you do, sign hunting.

Ms. Opthof-Cordaro

- She said she did attend the EAC, but maybe Laura, does she have any updates for the EAC? She doesn't have to give it if she doesn't want to. Ms. Ray said Ms. Opthof-Cordaro can give an update if she wants. She doesn't recall. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said she just attended, she's not the liaison. She just attended and she appreciated that everybody had a lot of thoughtful input and she looks forward to seeing what Laura and the EAC does. She looks forward to that.
- Otherwise, the one thing she wanted to ask about was there's a gate, she guesses, between two communities. Priscilla, does she know what she's talking about, the gate? Ms. deLeon said the historic thing, the historic heritage center? Mr. Opthof-Cordaro said no, like there's a gate in between, it's off of Meadows. Ms. deLeon said yes, Stover Road, is it Stover Road, Stover. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said it's between two communities. She sent Mark that email. Ms. deLeon said the gate. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said does he know what they are talking about the gate. Mr. Hudson said he did see it, but didn't have time to look at it. Ms. deLeon said he didn't have time to look at it. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said she just wanted to see if he could look into it. There's a gate and she apologizes to the public for not remembering the name of the street, but there is two communities and a lot of the people within the communities like to go between the communities and walk their dogs and do things, but there's a security gate that's there in place which prevents people from traversing from one community to the other and some residents have asked that they look into whether there's any need to have the gate there any longer for security purposes or whatever. So, they are hopeful they get the street name but just to ask Mark to look into that and see what they can do, what are the pros, what are the cons, what the police say, what the fire guys say, that's it. Thank you. Ms. deLeon said that's it? Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said that's it.

Ms. deLeon

- She said she'd like to announce that next Thursday on January 18th, the Landfill Committee meeting will meet and the time has been changed to 2:00 p.m., correct? Ms. Opthof-Cordaro

said 2:00 p.m. for the Landfill Committee meeting. Ms. deLeon said do we need a motion to do that? She will make a motion just to have it on the table to change the Landfill Committee meeting to 2:00 p.m., the quarterly meetings.

➤
MOTION BY: Ms. deLeon moved to announce that the Landfill Committee meeting will be on January 18th at 2:00 p.m.

SECOND BY: Ms. Opthof-Cordaro

Ms. deLeon said wait, she can't make a motion. Mr. Hudson said he doesn't think they need a motion. Ms. deLeon said the new Sunshine Law says you...Okay, so she will direct the Manager to do that.

- She said she wants to thank staff for You Tubing the EAC meeting the other night. She thinks it was a success and she watched it from the comfort of her home. Ms. Ray said maybe that's something to mention about the streaming is actually happening of the meetings. She forgot about that, so the EAC was broadcast on You Tube and she guesses the Planning will be also, if they have a Planning meeting. Mr. Hudson said correct, yes. That's the plan.
- She also wants to talk about the rain event from the other day. She knows Mark took videos of the waterfalls on the Narrows and she'd like to talk about that at the Landfall Committee meeting next Thursday. She's also hearing a lot of complaints, seeing a lot of complaints on Facebook from Steel City residents about the increased water issues. The berms that have been redirecting water with the newly macadam streets and it flooded basements for first time ever, what is the cause? So, she'd like Mr. Hudson to look into that. Mr. Hudson said okay. Ms. deLeon said she can think of two off the top of her head. That's all she has.
- She said for those of you who love to eat out, Hellertown-Lower Saucon Chamber is having their restaurant week starting Sunday through Saturday and she hopes that they are going to be posting the restaurants that are on. Mr. Hudson said yes, he just couldn't find it. Ms. deLeon said okay, check the Township's Facebook page and support our local restaurants and just thank them for being part of the Chamber. She's on the Chamber board and she really would appreciate that.

Jr. Council – Absent

C. SOLICITOR

- Mr. Freed said just briefly, they received two appeals to the land development decision that was rendered by Council in December related to the Bethlehem Landfill. One from a group of residents and one from St. Luke's. Ms. deLeon said okay, thank you.

D. ENGINEER – Absent

7. PUBLIC COMMENT – NON-AGENDA ITEMS – 5 MINUTE TIME LIMIT – OPEN TO EVERYONE

- Russ Sutton said they were talking about washouts occurring in Steel City. Well, a lot of has to do with this. They've logged, supposedly selective logging...Ms. deLeon said can he pass it down from up here. Mr. Sutton said sure, it's two sides, and this is not all of it. It's actually almost 100 acres if you add it all together. He's asked just about everybody, basically it's State forestry. The Township doesn't have control. The County doesn't have control. He knows he spoke to Mark to find out information about it and he actually went to the Forest Management and Timber Harvesting in PA and he found some information here. Diameter limited cutting is generally a destructive practice and this is from the Forest Management and Timber Harvesting in PA, and this is from the government, from the State government. It takes the best trees, the most valuable species, it leads to a progressive deterioration of the forest quality affecting tree diversity and quality. Such cutting reduces future management options, you should retain selective large trees to provide fall color in interesting patterns, but the big thing is the trees act as living filters and reduce surface runoff much more than land does. Logging normally disturbs less than 10% of the forest soil. You are talking about acres up here. This runs behind all of their houses. They received no notification that they were harvested. He knows this is private property, but the same token is how they found out about it was the crashing in their backyards of being woken up into the morning by trees being felled. They went in with machines and ripped them out by the roots with

compact, with Caterpillar treads, which compacts the soil and they are not supposed to do that. They are supposed to use chain saws and cables to pull them out when they do selective harvesting. Basically, they literally destroyed the whole area and it goes from all the way from, what was the road, Quincy all the way down to Riverside Drive, the whole mountain. So one owns 30 acres, one owns 20 acres and the other one owns 40 acres. So that's a huge amount of land and not only that there's nothing there now in some spots, nothing to prevent rain runoff. The slope is sometimes greater than 45% there. They are not supposed to do that. Supposedly, all timber harvesting operations in PA must have a plan to control erosion and sediment. They are not supposed to disturb more than 25 or more acres at a time. All earth disturbance activities require development and implement of a written erosion and sediment plan. The erosion and sediment plan shall be prepared by a person trained and experienced in erosion and sediment control, methods and techniques applicable to the size and scope of the project being designed. They are supposed to protect existing drainage features, the vegetation, minimize soil compaction, utilize other measures of controls that prevent or minimize the generation of increased storm water runoff. The erosion and sediment plan must contain drawings and narratives and consider such factors as topological features, soils, volumes and right of runoff. Also, maintenance programs for BMP's, waste disposal, geological formations and thermal impacts to surface waters. The erosion and sediment plan must be available at the project site during all phases of earth disturbance activity. There are no postings up there whatsoever and he went through the whole area and took those pictures. He went through that whole area. And also, you have to deal with the potential damage of these logging trucks going over these roads because they exceed the weight limit. These are huge trees. They are 3', 4' in diameter, 100' long and they just are destroying the whole mountain. They are trying to save the mountain up by the dump, and in the meantime, the mountain right behind their house is being destroyed. He hopes the Council can find out more information from the State. What permits that they got, why isn't there a permit up there, did they get a permit, where's the plan for the runoff and the drainage. There's nothing there. He went around the whole area. There's nothing, nothing posted anywhere and it's just a total big mess. It's all coming down in their backyards. Thank you, and he just wishes someone could, he spoke to Robert Freeman and he's not getting answers from anybody. So, he'd like to know what permission they had and where are these permits and why aren't they being posted. Ms. deLeon said do we have any of that in the Township files? Mr. Hudson said yes. Ms. deLeon said we have the permits? She knows she saw some of them. Mr. Hudson said yes. Ms. deLeon said she never saw a logging plan. Mr. Hudson said it's all there. Ms. deLeon said that's public information. He can stop by the Township and look through it. Mr. Sutton said so they did submit a plan. Mr. Hudson said yes. Mr. Sutton said for soil erosion and all of that. Mr. Hudson said County Conversation was out there several times, so. Ms. Ray said so they think they are following the plan? Mr. Hudson said they were good with it. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said she thought just at EAC, she remembers there was, the board made a motion for recommendation to Council and maybe, that was yesterday or the day before, so, it was regarding looking at our timbering ordinance. She thinks we had a timbering ordinance and then there was a lawsuit and the State came down with some guidelines. Mr. Hudson said the State told them what they needed put in their ordinance. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said so they checked. Ms. deLeon said that was years ago when the acre thing came out with the trees a crop and all of that stuff. Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said okay, she knew there was some, she's just heard that the State regulations preempted their more restrictive ordinance so she wanted to just see what we could do with their ordinance, if they could. That's all. Ms. deLeon said it's already done.

- Bob Blasko said he's a resident of LST. After witnessing what has gone on at Council tonight and some of the things that were brought up... Ms. deLeon said he needs to speak into the microphone, she can't hear him, sorry. Mr. Blasko said after witnessing what has gone on at Council this evening, he has a lot that he would like to say to a particular member of Council who has left. However, were he still here, he still would not say it because as a woman, a lady expressed earlier, the tenure in these meetings has to change. Anyone whose has attended these meetings when he's been here or watched on You Tube knows that he can get down to nitty gritty and you want to punch and throw punches, he can take one as well as give one. He doesn't want to go there. There are a lot of things that have been brought up this evening that were misrepresented as far as he is concerned. Misquoted, one of those when Jason said they wanted to raise taxes .9. No, they never said that. They said they wanted to raise the fire tax from .75 to .9. There's a difference. We all know that the reason those taxes were lowered was a political ploy. If it were not, it would have been spoken up before the election. It would have been used as a

campaign tool. It is a time for change. He sincerely thinks that those on Council, most of them, majority of them anyway, are interested in the welfare of LST and its citizens. He thinks that the previous Council that held the majority, felt that they were interested, felt that they were interested in the best for LST and its citizens; however, there are different ways to get there, different ways to do that. Enough of that. They have pictures. He and his wife went out the day after the storm and they took pictures. They can get Council those pictures. She's got them on her camera but just down from Ringhoffer Road on Applebutter Road, right where, right now they have the concrete, it looks like highway barriers up there where they are working there and dumping now, presently at the landfill, the water and this was, he was up at 1:30 a.m. that morning. It had stopped raining at that point. So here we are at 11:30 a.m., ten hours later and there was a stream in one spot just downhill on Applebutter from Ringhoffer, a literal stream and you can actually see the blocks in the background of the picture where they are currently dumping at the landfill. When he had called Matt Vipond up, well, they have retention ponds. He said Matt, he said look, he can put a 5-gallon bucket in the middle of his 3.5 acres and it doesn't mean he's catching all of the rain and keeping it from running off his property. So, yes, it does exist. It's still going on from there. That goes into the East Branch of the Saucon, then into the Saucon about ½ mile downstream, then into the Lehigh about another ½ mile downstream and five or six miles downstream into the Delaware. So, it's still going on. They still have to report it. They did call. They are continuing to call. It's not enough, people, and he needs to remind everyone it's not enough to put it on the website. They have to call the number for DEP and register that complaint, thank you. Ms. deLeon said thank you Bob for reminding everybody to do that.

Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said just before this next speaker, Mr. Blasko can he send those pictures to the Manager just so they have the for the Landfill Committee Meeting next week. Ms. deLeon said good idea.

- Dave Boulin said by the way, he remembers talking to Brien and Mark about four years ago. He has a swale in his backyard. If you want to run a boat or sail during the storm from here, he'd say from that wall to that wall, that's how wide the swale is. Maybe a foot deep and guess what, it keeps going, it goes down the road and washes things out. They talked about it, okay, so yea, heavy duty rains are really a problem. He guesses the Bethlehem Land Sewage Facility probably dumped a lot of their sewage into the river as they found out, right. So they know about that. So that's a real problem. The thing is to follow up on it. He's surprised that the previous speaker, when he had a problem with all that logging, didn't go to the EAC and say, hey, what do I do because they should have said, DEP. Right, those people, the best management practices and all that vocabulary comes right on out. They are there to protect the property. He doesn't know when you denude all that property, take all those trees, as he said, he's quite right, he knows that. Bottom line is what's going to happen with all that silt. Right into the river. Who is going to do something about that? We all knew, he should say "we", he didn't know about it, but he clearly knows hey, we have an up and down landscape in this town. You are either at the bottom or you are at the top and you are going to get it. So he would suggest that maybe some of these calls be redirected to our Township people that handle those areas and get hold of the DEP and boy, let's work on them, it's important if you are going to be on committees. Thank you.
- Mark Ozimek said here comes troublemaker. That's his mission in life. Ms. deLeon said state your name for the record please. He said Mark Ozimek, LST resident. If you watched the EAC meeting the other night, you heard him. He's about to start again. Apparently, there's enough money in funding to fix Southeastern Fire Company. If you don't want to take it from there, and you want to try and help raise some money for the Township, he thinks the Township should take over the landfill. He saw Priscilla put out the notice about writing to DEP. Well, you know what. DEP takes too long. HEA is just HEA. Mark Freed could look into this, but he says LS takes over the dump and by that he means, make a limit. If there's ten calls in Steel City and it smells bad or like when he goes up his street and he's pretty far away and people can smell it on 78 and complain, you either start, LST itself starts fining the dump – moneywise. If they don't listen, you shut them down. Here's your punishment, you are closed for a day. You are closed for a week and you hit them in the pocket book because there's no reason that they shouldn't be up there covering up their garbage daily like their supposed to do. And apparently, the DEP doesn't threaten them enough; and HEA, they are no threat at all. It's up to the Township because they are the people that put up with it. They are the people that got to live with it. It's our creeks. It's our streams. It's our rivers. It's our property and that's the way it is so that's

what...one of the main things they should be working on and it will generate more money, for the Township. He means, they get their host fees, whatever, leave that alone. Whatever they do with it, whatever you do with it, but you create a separate thing and if they can't take care of their dump, you make them pay for. Just look at what you guys, not you guys, whoever came up with the idea, just look at what the Township does to people when they want to build new houses. You can't get a residential permit because there ain't 10' worth of blacktop in the end of your driveway. What the hell does that got to do with living in a perfectly brand new house. Then the Township wants to keep taking money out of people's pockets to do it. You have the ability, he believes, that they could go to the dump and say, here's the new rules in LST. You are going to start abiding by them. He's like the neighborhood prick, and maybe there's part of LST that should start doing that because he'll take Banonis' seat or he'll take Carocci's seat because like he told you, in two years if his health is as good as it is now, and he feels up to it, he's gonna battle him right out of his seat. Help the Township. Help yourselves and make the dump take care of itself. You got the video. Ms. deLeon said may she respond to his comment. Okay, she'd like to say that in 1998 when the City of Bethlehem sold the landfill, to a private entity, the first private entity that bought it, they had to renegotiate the Host Agreement and if you can find a copy of that 1998 agreement, it has about 20 WHEREAS' s and those WHEREAS' s took out, they got fined 25% and if they got a NOV, there was all kinds of things that in the old agreement that the majority of Council back then, not her, as she voted no to the agreement, had in there as protection clauses for the Township. Unfortunately, they went out the window and then this latest Host Agreement is even more atrocious, so, which she did not vote for either, so. Mr. Ozimek said who made the last Host Agreement. Ms. deLeon said she has no idea. Mr. Ozimek said Council. Ms. deLeon said not her. Ms. Ray said they approved it. Ms. deLeon said what did you say Laura. Ms. Ray said the Council had approved it. Ms. deLeon said they approved it but it was probably handed to the Solicitor, not you. Mr. Ozimek said okay, off the subject of the dump, didn't the last Council start a Federal lawsuit with the State for something for the library. Didn't they try to...Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said that's the OCL case, Office of Commonwealth Libraries the Township is currently pursuing, she thinks, a litigation. We are suing the OCL, so yea. Mr. Ozimek said dead out of the window now since Treadwell is gone. Ms. deLeon said they really can't discuss litigation right now. There's too many complications so. Mr. Ozimek said well find out a way to go back after the Host Agreement, whatever they have to do and start making the dump pay for the damage they are doing. Ms. deLeon said okay, thank you.

➤ Dave Willard said he has a suggestion for the next meeting which he thinks will address many of the comments that were made and provide some clarity before they vote on the budget. He thinks a simple matrix, which shows the property tax, millage rate proposed in the original budget, the fire tax, and the total tax, from September, what it was changed to in December and what they are proposing now plus as Laura indicated, going back several years to show whether there's a freaking tax increase of not, would provide clarity for everyone in the room, so he does agree that's a missing element from tonight that would have saved them a lot of confusing discussion. Ms. deLeon said well it was hard because individually they didn't know, you know what she's saying. Mr. Willard said that's fine, he's making a suggestion for the next meeting along with what's in the resolution, level of civility and atmosphere of reason, expression of ideas. Thank you Council. Ms. deLeon said that's really appreciated, thank you Dave.

Ms. Opthof-Cordaro said she'd like to direct Cathy and the new Controller to prepare something like that, that would be illustrative and maybe test it out, sit in the room, and see if you can read it, just to check, just so. She wants to make sure everybody understands it. Mr. Hudson said they'll work on it. Ms. deLeon said okay, anybody else. That's the end of public non-agenda items.

8. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY: Ms. Opthof-Cordaro moved for adjournment. The time was 9:10 p.m.

SECOND BY: Ms. deLeon

ROLL CALL: 3-0 (Mr. Banonis – Absent; Mr. Carocci – Absent)

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS

- A. Landfill Committee Meeting – January 18, 2024
- B. Saucon Rail Trail Oversight Commission – January 22, 2024
- C. Zoning Hearing Board – January 22, 2024
- D. Planning Commission – January 25, 2024
- E. Parks and Recreation Board – February 5, 2024
- F. Council Meeting – February 7, 2024
- G. Environmental Advisory Council – February 13, 2024

Submitted by:

Mark Hudson
Township Manager

Priscilla deLeon
Council President