

**Pocono Township Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2026 | 6:00 p.m.**

The regular meeting of the Pocono Township Board of Commissioners was held on January 20, 2026 and was opened by Chair Ellen Gndt at 6:30 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Ellen Gndt, present; Natasha Leap, present; Mike Velardi, present; Matt Long, present, Charles Keppler, present.

In Attendance: Leo DeVito-Township Solicitor; Jon Tresslar- Engineer; Patrick Briegel-Public Works Director; Jerrod Belvin-Township Manager; James Wagner, Chief of Police; Erica Tomas-Administrative Assistant, Paul Morgan, SFM Consulting.

Announcements

Chairman of the Board, Ellen Gndt read a statement regarding meeting conduct along with making note of the public clarification and statements posted to the website and social media. Charles Keppler then commented on his statements made at the meeting of January 5, 2026 and how his comments may have been misinterpreted.

An executive session was held prior to the meeting to discuss litigation and personnel.

Presentations

Zoning Hearing Board Alternates (2 Positions) interviews took place. Jim Pellegrini, Lew Ginsberg, Gina Loyek, Dan McCreary, Nick Wilson, Guy Doleiden: Natasha Leap made a motion, seconded by Mike Velardi, to re-elect Lew Ginsberg to the Zoning Hearing Board. Discussion among the board took place. Roll call: Ellen Gndt, aye; Natasha Leap, aye; Mike Velardi, aye; Matt Long, aye; Charles Keppler, nay. Motion carried. (4-1). Mike Velardi made a motion, seconded by Natasha Leap, to appoint Gina Loyek to the ZHB as an alternate. Discussion among the board took place. Roll call: Ellen Gndt, nay; Natasha Leap, aye; Mike Velardi, aye; Matt Long, nay; Charles Keppler, nay. Motion failed (3-2). Ellen Gndt made a motion, seconded by Matt Long, to nominate Dan McCreary to the alternate position. Discussion: Matt Long listed Mr. McCreary's experience. Roll call: Ellen Gndt, aye; Natasha Leap, aye; Mike Velardi, nay; Matt Long, aye; Charles Keppler, aye. Motion carried (4-1).

Vacancy Chair Position-Interviews; Brandee Starner, Nick Wilson, Todd Sebring, David Marra, Jim Pelegrini. Mike Velardi made a motion, seconded by Natasha Leap, to appoint Brandee Starner to the Vacancy Chair. Roll call: Ellen Gndt, nay; Natasha Leap, aye; Mike Velardi, aye; Matt Long, nay; Charles Keppler, nay. Motion fails (3-2). Charles Keppler made a motion, seconded by Ellen Gndt, to appoint David Marra to the vacancy chair. Roll call: Ellen Gndt, aye; Natasha Leap, nay; Mike Velardi, aye; Matt Long, aye; Charles Keppler, aye. Motion carried. (4-1)

Matt Long thanked everyone for applying.

Resolutions

- Mike Velardi made a motion, seconded by Natasha Leap, to approve Resolution 2026-02 granting an extension of 12 months to Brookstead Apartments Resolution Conditions. Discussion: Hanover Engineers explained the reason for the extension. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Ellen Gndt made a motion, seconded by Matt Long, to table the four resolutions that were set for approval on the Swiftwater Solar project. Jon Tresslar stated they didn't need resolutions. Gina Loyek asked if section 106 was completed and submitted on this project due to it being done on Historic Federal Lands.
- Ellen Gndt made a motion, seconded by Matt Long, to approve Resolution 2026-07 Approving the payment of certain township bills and expenses pending the amendment if any of the 2026 Pocono Township Budget. Jim Pelegrini inquired regarding the changes made to the budget, what they are and if they will be highlighted. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Matt Long made a motion, seconded by Ellen Gndt, to approve Resolution 2026-08 Approving the Pennvest Financial Assistance Application with regard to construction, rehabilitation, and/or

extension of the water/sewer system. Discussion; Ellen Gnantd asked regarding the Letter of Responsibility. Leo DeVito explained. Ellen Gnantd asked regarding attachment C letter L. Jerrod Belvin explained that we are under contract with PFM. They will be attending the next meeting. Elizabeth Cassiano asked regarding the sewer extension and where it's being extended to. Pat Briegel addressed her concerns. All in favor. Motion carried.

Consent Agenda

- Ellen Gnantd made a motion, seconded by Charles Keppler, for final 2025 appropriations prior to approving bills. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Ellen Gnantd made a motion, seconded by Matt Long, to Not approve the minutes of January 5, 2026 prior to changes being made. Discussion: Matt Long stated that during the meeting there was a serious discussion regarding a Sunshine Act Violation and asked for the solicitor's comment to be included in the minutes. Further discussion was had regarding the narrative of the minutes Jerrod Belvin stated that this is why we need a policy in place. We have been directed to change the way they are done many times with no clear direction. Ellen Gnantd made a motion, seconded by Matt Long, to table the minutes until the next meeting. All in favor. Motion carried.
 - Old business consisting of the minutes of the January 5, 2025 regular meeting and Re-Organization meeting of the Board of Commissioners.
 - Ellen Gnantd made a motion, seconded by Matt Long, to approve the Financial transactions through January 20, 2026 as presented, including ratification of expenditures in the amount of \$714,742.46 for the following accounts: General Fund, Sewer Operations, Gross Payroll, Construction Fund. All in favor. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Comments

Ellen Gnantd – President

- Ellen Gnantd made a motion, seconded by Charles Keppler to table Meeting Decorum Policy, Public Meeting Notice (Signage), Public Comment Rules, Meeting Conduct Policy Discussion: Natasha Leap asked if the entire idea will be scrapped. Ellen Gnantd stated no, just some minor changes to look at. Roll call: Ellen Gnantd, aye; Natasha Leap, nay; Mike Velardi, nay; Matt Long, aye; Charles Keppler, aye. Motion carried (3-2).
- Ellen Gnantd made a motion, seconded by Matt Long, to advertise budget hearing date of Feb-06, 2026 at 5pm. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Ellen Gnantd made a motion, seconded by Mike Velardi to appoint Gina Treasurer for an additional stipend of \$8,000 /year. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Solar Field update – No construction is going on at the present time. They will be recording their plans
- Warehouse blasting update – Jerrod Belvin went over the blasting schedule that was sent to him. Cheryl Parks expressed her feelings regarding the blasting notifications. Karen Doleiden stated that it is very scary and they should be notified better than just an 8-hour period.

Matt Long – Vice-Chairman

- Matt Long made a motion, seconded by Natasha Leap, to authorize purchase of police vehicle in the amount of \$108,107.30. Discussion: Ellen Gnantd stated that we had voted not to make capital purchased until the new budget is adopted. Matt stated his view. Joe Folsom stated how can we approve this purchase prior to the budget approval. Matt stated that expenditures were approved and this is the only capital purchase being affected by the pause. Further discussion was had among the board. Jim Wagner stated it was more the upfit that we are up against a timeline with. Roll call: Ellen Gnantd, nay; Natasha Leap, aye; Mike Velardi, aye; Matt Long, aye; Charles Keppler, aye. Motion carried (4-1).
- Matt Long made a motion, seconded by Ellen Gnantd, to authorize township solicitor to draft an ordinance creating an Environmental Advisory Council in Pocono Township. Discussion took place among the board. All in favor. Motion carried.

- Amusement Tax Audits Discussion: A meeting will take place at the township building on February 2nd at 2:30 p.m. for information gathering.

Commissioner Comments

Natasha Leap – Commissioner

- Natasha Leap made a motion, seconded by Charles Keppler, to authorize township solicitor to advertise for hearing on the Chicken Ordinance recommendation from the Planning Commission. Lengthy Discussion was had by the board and residents. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Natasha Leap made a motion, seconded by Mike Velardi, to authorize Township Solicitor to advertise rezoning hearing for MCTI Parcels, from R1 to R2. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Natasha Leap made a motion, seconded by Mike Velardi, to authorize Township Solicitor to work with PTVFC to have Pocono Township Solicitor assist with Fire Department to discuss billing procedures and try to get more efficient and cost effective in recoveries. Discussion was had among the board and the fire chief. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Natasha Leap made a motion, seconded by Mike Velardi, to set 100% designation of funds raised from Township Events to PTVFC 34. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Natasha Leap made a motion, seconded by Mike Velardi, to approve the employment contract for Patrick Briegel at a 4% increase with a salary of \$127,036 to include a full benefit package. Discussion was had among the board. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Natasha Leap asked regarding the decorum policy for confirmation that it would be discussed at the following meeting. Leo DeVito clarified the changes that are being considered.

Mike Velardi – Commissioner

- Mike Velardi stated that the statements expressed by individual board members are their own and do not necessarily represent the official position of the board nor himself.
- Mike Velardi made a motion, seconded by Natasha Leap for discussion purposed, to declare Pocono Township a 2nd amendment Sanctuary Township. Mike Velardi explained what a 2nd amendment sanctuary means. Lengthy discussion was had among the board and residents. Matt Long made a motion, seconded by Charles Keppler to table the declaration of Pocono Township as a 2nd Amendment Sanctuary Township. Roll Call: Ellen Gnantt, aye; Natasha Leap, nay; Mike Velardi, nay; Matt Long, aye; Charles Keppler, aye. Motion carried. (3-2)
- Mike Velardi read a statement regarding comments made by Commissioner Keppler during the January 5th BOC Meeting and due to those actions, he eroded public confidence and therefore requested Charles Keppler to resign from the Pocono Township Board of Commissioners. Charles Keppler respectfully declined.
- Mike Velardi suggested that in order to ensure a fair gubernatorial and US election, Pennsylvania should adopt an electoral college system.

Charles Keppler – Commissioner

- Charles Keppler made a motion, seconded by Matt Long for the purpose of discussion, to instruct the solicitor to draft a noise ordinance. A Lengthy discussion was had between the board and public. Roll call: Ellen Gnantt, nay; Natasha Leap, nay; Mike Velardi, nay; Matt Long, nay; Charles Keppler, aye. Motion fails (4-1).
- Ellen Gnantt made a motion to table No Second was noted. the letter to the Eastern Monroe Public Library Board of Trustees. Discussion was once again had among the public and board. Roll call: Ellen Gnantt, aye; Natasha Leap, nay; Mike Velardi, nay; Matt Long, aye; Charles Keppler, aye. Motion carries (3-2). Lengthy discussions was had among the board and public.

Reports

Zoning Report-SFM Consulting – Paul Morgan went over the zoning report for December 15th to the 20th.

Police – James Wagner, Chief

- Chief Wagner reviewed the stats for the department with the board.
- Chief Wagner also went over the fund-raising efforts of the department in the month of December and updated the Board on the charities they were able to donate to along with their yearly participation with the Monroe County Children and youth holiday gift drive.
- The new Tahoe has arrived and put into service today with the new graphics.
- We have two new officers coming to us from Pocono Mountain Regional as lateral transfers. They have been vetted through our Civil Service Commission who provided a letter of recommendation to hire. Ellen Gndt made a motion, seconded by Natasha Leap, to approve the hire of Officers Dustin Rentschler and Dan Campagna. Discussion: Josh Knapp asked how many officers we now employ. Chief Wagner stated 22. All in favor. Motion carried.

Fire Report – Corey Sayer

- Asst. Chief Sayer went over the accomplishments for the year and informed the board that they held their first essentials class for the township.
- Natasha Leap asked the Chief to do a brief recap of the capital expenditures that the fire company are looking at over the next few years.

Manager Report – Jerrod Belvin

- Grant Award – We received the State wide LSA for first Monroe County's first outdoor gym over at TLC and a small water and sewer grant for the extension going up Sullivan Trail in the amount of \$484,000.
- Natasha Leap made a motion, seconded by Ellen Gndt, to donate \$500.00 to the Historical Association. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Traffic & Green-Light-Go Safety enhancements update was given.

Public Works – Patrick Briegel

- Sewer Business Update – We have the overall Penn Vest sewer study coming up next meeting and our engineers are getting the bid package together.
- As far as the ice rink, it depends on the weather if the ice is suitable for skating.
- Current Public Works Projects: They have been spending a lot of time either out plowing snow or preparing to plow, hauling salt and cinders, and maintaining equipment.
- Pat announced that he has just completed some ongoing education on stormwater management.

Township Engineer Report- Jon Tresslar

- Learn Road Roundabout cost update – T&M's costs to date are \$42,000. The estimated cost are approximately \$100,000.00. Ellen Gndt asked if the engineering or easements were included and the answer is no.
- Discussion was had regarding ethics and awarding the bid. Charles Keppler made a motion, seconded by Mike Velardi, to award the Roundabout Bid Winner through Penn Bid to Northeast Site Contractors. All in favor. Motion carried.
- TASA Project – resubmitted to PennDOT
- TLC walking bridge – Plans Submitted to DEP

Township Solicitor Report-Leo V. DeVito.

- Consideration of censure: Ellen Gndt made a motion, seconded by Natasha Leap, to table the consideration of censure. All in favor. Motion carried.
- General legal update- Historic Overlay Hearing scheduled for Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment –Ellen Gndt made a motion, seconded by Matt Long, to adjourn the meeting at 10:12 p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.