

EXHIBIT "A"

Statement of the Board of Commissioners

Before we begin tonight's meeting, I would like to address a recent article published by the *Pocono Review* that has generated questions within our community.

The Board of Commissioners believes it is important that the public record accurately reflect how Pocono Township operates. While we fully respect the freedom of the press and the constitutional right to free speech, those rights carry with them the responsibility to report facts accurately and fairly. When published information contains factual inaccuracies or creates implications that are not supported by the official record, we have an obligation to correct those inaccuracies.

First, the Public Works Director and Interim Township Managers do not determine which development, commercial, or infrastructure projects are approved or completed in Pocono Township. Those decisions are made by the Board of Commissioners or by other public bodies acting within the authority granted to them by law. No Township employee has unilateral authority to approve or deny such projects.

Second, the article references Pocono Mountains Industries (PMI). To the Board's knowledge, PMI does not own property within Pocono Township. Any statement or implication to the contrary is inaccurate.

Third, the article states that the previous Township Manager served for 17 years. That is incorrect. The previous Township Manager served in that position for approximately one and one-half years.

Fourth, questions have been raised regarding Statements of Financial Interests. Under Pennsylvania law, these statements are filed annually for the preceding calendar year. Our Interim Township Manager will file the required Statement of Financial Interests by the statutory filing deadline of May 1, 2027. As Public Works Director his Statements of Financial Interest were filed.

Fifth, no individual serving on any Township board, commission, or committee has unilateral authority to bind the Township or make official decisions on behalf of that body. Township action occurs through votes taken by the appropriate public body at duly advertised public meetings, as required by law.

I also want to address comments concerning Mr. Patrick Briegel. Mr. Briegel is a respected member of our Township leadership team and has the confidence of this Board. His outside business activities have never been hidden from the Township. The Township contracted with Mr. Briegel in 2016 and 2017, years before he became a Township employee, and his outside business interests were fully disclosed. The Board was aware of those activities when it later hired him as an employee. Nothing about that relationship was concealed from the Township.

More importantly, this Board values all of its employees. Our employees come to work each day to serve the residents of Pocono Township professionally and with integrity.

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While public officials and employees should expect scrutiny, they also deserve to have that scrutiny based upon verified facts rather than inaccurate information or unsupported implications. This Board will not remain silent when the integrity of our employees is unfairly questioned.

The Township's official actions are reflected in its meeting minutes, resolutions, ordinances, and other public records. We encourage any resident seeking factual information to review those records, which are available to the public.

Finally, I respectfully ask the *Pocono Review* to review the factual errors identified this evening and to publish appropriate corrections or retractions where warranted. Accurate reporting benefits not only the Township but also the public's trust in both local government and the media. Mr. Briegel has the full support of the Pocono Township Board of Commissioners.

With that, we will proceed with tonight's agenda.