

**Pocono Township Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2025 | 6:00 p.m.**

The regular meeting of the Pocono Township Board of Commissioners was held on March 12, 2025 and was opened by Chair Richard Wielebinski at 6:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Ellen Gndt, present; Natasha Leap-Vice President, present; Mike Velardi, present; Brian Winot, present. Rich Wielebinski-President, present.

In Attendance: Leo DeVito-Township Solicitor; Jon Tressler-Engineer; James Wagner-Chief of Police; Patrick Briegel-Public Works Director; Jennifer Gambino-Events Coordinator; Jerrod Belvin-Township Manager, Lindsay Scerbo, SFM Consulting, Erica Tomas, Administrative Assistant.

Public Comment

Cheryl Parks (Resident) – Concerned with a special exception application, missing site plan, wetlands issues, unauthorized property changes, deed restrictions, drainage problems, and multiple dogs on the neighboring property. Bought her property in 1987 and feels harassed by neighbor.

Charles Kepler (Resident) – Announced candidacy for Pocono Township Commissioner. Opposes LERTA, arguing it favors big corporations over small businesses and suggests a more targeted approach for historic buildings and local businesses. Proposed a community workshop.

B. Winot explained how nothing Mr. Kepler described constitutes a LERTA.

Vincent Trapasso (Resident) – Explained how a LERTA will assist local developers like himself to continue to build and assist in keeping the taxes within the township down for everyone.

Josh Knapp (Resident) – Opposes blanket LERTA but sees value in a targeted approach. Warns it could shift the tax burden. Cited the Johnson & Johnson warehouse as an example. B. Winot corrected his information. Urged a more responsible review to earn his support.

Announcements

An executive session was held on March 3 for personnel.

The Board of Commissioners meeting scheduled for March 17th has now been moved to Tuesday, March 25th due to the importance and large number of hearings and to allow all commissioners to be in attendance.

Consent Agenda

- Old business consisting of the minutes of February 18, 2025 regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners.
- Financial transactions through February 27, 2025 as presented, including ratification of general fund expenditures, sewer operating expenditures and gross payroll, vouchers payable, sewer operating expenditures, construction fund expenditures, capital reserve expenditures and transfers in the amount of \$354,302.31.(Summary Page of packet)

R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by M. Velardi, to approve the consent agenda. All in favor. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS –

Personnel – None

Travel/Training Authorizations - None

Commissioner Comments

Richard Wielebinski – President

- R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by N. Leap, to donate the meeting room conference table & chairs to Jackson Township once Pocono Township moves into the new location. All in favor. Motion carried.
- R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by N. Leap, to authorize advertisement for the Learn Road Roundabout Bids. All in favor. Motion carried.

Natasha Leap – Vice President

Ellen Gndt – Commissioner

- SBA Cell Tower – No updates.
- Solar Field – They are in compliance with everything.
- Kennel – No updates.
- E. Gndt Questioned the purpose of a bus load of people from NJ to Ruby Lane, dropping off and picking up. Zoning has sent out a letter to the owner for a response to use. Signage was discussed once again regarding Ruby Lane. N. Leap asked P. Briegel to take a look at the existing road sign, no action taken.
- E. Gndt asked that last minute changes moving forward be posted on the township Facebook page and Savvy Citizen.
- E. Gndt asked L. DeVito to elaborate on his findings regarding an opinion from the Ethics Commission concerning commissioners and their involvement with developers in relation to the LERTA. L. DeVito has drafted a letter for review by the board prior to mailing it out. E. Gndt asked if it would preclude discussions or can the board move forward.

Brian Winot – Commissioner

- B. Winot made a motion, seconded by R. Wielebinski, to exclude a property from the LERTA. All in favor. Motion carried.
- B. Winot made a motion, seconded by R. Wielebinski, to exclude the property with the tax ID 12.11.1.3-5, the project known as The Ridge to be excluded from the LERTA District. All in favor. Motion carried.
- B. Winot made a motion, seconded by R. Wielebinski, to authorize and direct the Solicitor to research and prepare an amendment to the LERTA Ordinance of this Township to exclude from, or minimize the application of, the LERTA Ordinance to any warehouse, distribution, wind or solar projects, for further consideration by the Board. Discussion: E. Gndt questioned who would be preparing the amendment, Pocono Township's solicitor or the outside firm. L. DeVito explained the issue being, can we selectively exclude a use that is permitted in a district with a blanket LERTA Ordinance. B. Winot stated that every objection at the school board level has been about the warehouses. He suggested excluding the overlay. L. DeVito pointed out that it does not address the wind and solar. **Amended Motion:** B. Winot made a motion, seconded by R. Wielebinski, to authorize and direct the Solicitor to research and prepare an amendment to the LERTA Ordinance of this Township to exclude all uses permitted in the Enterprise Warehouse Overlay District. All in favor. Motion carried.
- B. Winot made a motion, seconded by R. Wielebinski, to partner with Susquehanna Accounting & Consulting Services Inc, to perform long-term Police Cost Study. Discussion, E. Gndt asked if they specialize in Police studies. J. Belvin clarified. All in favor. Motion carried.
- B. Winot made a motion, seconded by R. Wielebinski, to direct the Township Solicitor to research and prepare a proposed amendment to the Township's Zoning Ordinance clarifying that solar farms and wind arrays are not defined or regulated as "essential services." Discussion: B. Winot spoke with the head of the EPA, Lee Zeldin. The US Government is going to determine that they are not essential services, they are secondary power sources, as they can never switch to either one of them. They cannot be base load power. Further discussion was had with the board. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mike Velardi – Commissioner

Reports

Zoning Report –Lindsay Scerbo went over her report with the board.

Police Report – February report was sent out to the commissioners. The summary, 1024 calls for service, 23 criminal arrests, 15 summary, non-traffic arrests, 27 traffic accidents investigated, & 374 traffic contacts.

-All three drones have been received. All seven officers passed their part 107 FAA certification. Training will start the week of March 24th through the 27th. Invites will go out to the board to observe the training and operations.

Manager Report-Jerrold Belvin

- County Hazard Mitigation – No major update, expecting a draft for review in June.
- Update Green Light Go
- LERTA Update- 6pm 3/31 workshop for LERTA at Township Office
- NCC Update – Carpets are completed in the meeting room and chairs got delivered. Still on target to move in at the end of May.
- R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by N. Leap, to approve the purchase of a Canon TM-355 MFP Z36 Plotter/Scanner in the amount of \$9,495.00 **This price reflects an \$800 Rebate.** All in favor. Motion carried.
- Civil Service – Resignation Letter was received from Pete Nish. R. Wielebinski stated that Jack Burns verbally told him he would be resigning also. Nothing has been received in writing as of yet from Jack.
- Grants Update – working on a small water and sewer grant for expansion.
- PennDOT road study update – traffic counts and road studies will be conducted on the township roads this year.
- B. Winot asked about the PennDOT detour for Shine Hill Rd., the township will have to pay for detour signs on local roads. The detour has been moved up to August.
- B. Winot asked about the LSA Grants for Rimrock – Extension letters have been signed and sent out. Wawa received a multi-modal grant for that intersection.

Public Works-Patric Briegel

- Sewer Business Update – Generator service was performed on pump station five.
- The heating system for the DPW garage has been completed.
- MCTI & Sullivan Trail Expansions – Environmental work has restarted for the MCTI and Sullivan Trail work.
- R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by M. Velardi, to authorize the purchase of a PS#5 Flow Meter & Bioxide Pump in the amount of \$12,460.95. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Road paving update – 16 roads identified for a maintenance application. Bid's hopefully going out soon.
- Bridge Inspections – We met with Jason Carver, Bridge inspector, updates forthcoming.
- Fish Hill speed limit recommendation after review, has been determined to be 35 MPH.
- Parks Update – Brian is off to a great start. MVP pickleball courts and tennis courts have opened up. The ice rink at TLC has been removed for the season and the pickleball courts will open soon. Park staff are due back next week to prepare for the April 1st season opening.

Events Report-Jennifer Gambino

- Fishing derby registration will open soon.
- Partnering with the Monroe County Children and youth for a Community Egg Hunt April 6th, with county wide police, fire, and EMS.
- R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by N. Leap, to waive the pavilion fee for IU20 (Nonprofit) for 5/16/25. All in favor. Motion carried.
- R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by M. Velardi, to waive the pavilion fee for Boy Scouts troop 80 for 8/9/25. All in favor. Motion carried.

Township Engineer Report-Jon Tresslar

- Sewer Business Update – Surveying MCTI and at the college.
- Learn Road safety enhancement project and roundabout survey work. Out for Bid.
- Discussion regarding addressing and center line for Moss Drive) on next meeting agenda.
- Fish Hill Rd. – The two 25 MPH areas are appropriate. The Middle section should be set at 35 MPH.
- Bridge Report – Three bridges, Stadden Rd., Lower Scott Run, and Cranberry Creek Road all have scour issues and are on PennDOT's critical list, meaning they need to be addressed within the next six months. We will move forward and get the necessary permits for maintenance and then probably put them out for Bid on repairs.
- N. Leap asked if we have heard from Senator Brown's office of the DEP for Laurel Lake Dam. Discussion was had regarding alternate plans should the dam be shut down.

Township Solicitor Report-Leo DeVito

- Sewer Business Update – no updates
- General legal update –
 - Oral arguments 4/8 in Harrisburg at 9:30 for Sunset Hill Shooting Range.
 - Leo Mentioned engaging Edgar Siemens firm out of Harrisburg to advise concerning the LERTA and assist its process through with the county and school board. An Engagement letter has been received from them at a rate of \$315/hr.
 - R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by B. Winot, to hire Edgar Siemens, to be the Special Council for the LERTA. All in favor. Motion carried.
- Update – Archer Lane - None
- Learn Road Easement Process – Inching forward.
- TASA Sidewalk Update – Easements – received the documents that PennDOT is looking for. We are moving forward.

Public Comment

Vincent Trapasso (Resident) – Asked for an update on the Sullivan Trail sewer expansion. Hopefully moving on soon. Some testing has been done. He would be happy to provide well tests and mentioned a pumpstation area. He asked about the status of repairing the water issue on Mountain View Dr. and offered his assistance.

Charles Keppler (Resident) – Questioned why the LERTA needs to be a new construction for the building to qualify. He believes a workshop would be beneficial to address questions such as these. He stated that a State College borough used a LERTA specifically to revitalize older historic buildings in their town.

Adjournment – R. Wielebinski made a motion, seconded by M. Velardi, to adjourn the meeting 7:40p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.