

# UPPER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

## PUBLIC MEETING WORK SESSION MINUTES

September 12, 2023

This meeting was held in person at the Township and live streamed on our website at [www.uppergwynedd.org](http://www.uppergwynedd.org)

**PLEASE NOTE:** The Commissioners made decisions on the following items: #21, #28 and #32 and those decisions are included in these minutes.

### 1. Call to order

The September 12, 2023, Public Work Session of the Upper Gwynedd Township Board of Commissioners was called to order by President of the Board, Denise Hull at 7:00 PM. This meeting was recorded and visually taped.

### 2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bryson Schroeder from the VMSC.

### 3. Roll Call

Roll call was taken by Deanna Logan, Executive Assistant to the Township Manager. The individuals in attendance were:

Denise M. Hull	President
Katherine D. Carter	Vice President
Liz K. McNaney	Commissioner
Martha A. Simelaro	Commissioner
Sandra Zadell	Township Manager
Megan Weaver	Assistant Township Manager
Lauren Gallagher	Township Solicitor
Nicholas Cross	Township Engineer
David Duffy	Chief of Police

Commissioner Ruth Damsker, Zoning Officer E. Van Rieker and Finance Director Nathan Crittendon were absent.

### 4. Announcement of Executive Sessions

Ms. Gallagher said the Board met in Executive Session prior to this meeting to discuss matters of personnel.

### 5. VMSC Presentation (9/12)

Presented by VMSC Chief Shane Wheeler. Chief Wheeler said there has been a transition from an all-volunteer service to a paid unit. In the 90 years they have been in existence, they have never asked the municipalities for money. The challenges facing EMS agencies are reimbursement challenges, staffing shortfalls and constant threats to EMS. Prior to 2022, the VMSC only responded to 50% of the calls they received. In January of 2022, they hired a career chief to manage the VMSC. Money was invested in staffing, training, equipment and vehicles. In 2021, they had 1.8 units to service 120,000 people. Currently they have 7 units to service the community. They have increased wages to their personnel for retention but are lacking retirement benefits. The VMSC only gets paid if they transport a patient to the hospital. 30% of their services are not paid, which has accumulated over \$11M in unpaid services over the past 15 years. The VMSC has a 14% gap in funding, and they are looking for a sustainability plan for the future. VMSC patient service income is only covering 86% of the costs to operate, leaving a shortfall and are looking for a sustainable income. Municipal support will be used for equipment replacement, quality staffing, employee retention and improved clinical growth. They are looking for \$1.04 M - \$1.5 M between all North Penn municipalities.

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Mrs. Zadell commended Chief Wheeler for the amazing turnaround of the VMSC. The VMSC offers subscription services for individuals and families that eliminates the money owed due to an insurance shortfall.

Beth Miller thanked the VMSC for treating her during a recent call.

6. Recognition of Yin Young for 10 years of service to the Township (9/12)

Chief Duffy said before joining Upper Gwynedd, Officer Yin Young served as a police officer in the City of Philadelphia. Officer Young is assigned to the Patrol Division and has most recently served as a squad Officer in Charge. He is a member of the Motor Unit and the county Major Incident Response Team. Officer Young has assisted with the Department's National Night Out events. He is the recipient of several letters of commendation and the Medal of Valor. We look forward to many more years of service from Officer Young!

7. Recognition of Colleen Tronoski for 20 years of service to the Township (9/19)

8. Recognition of Denny Gerhart for 40 years of service to the Township (9/19)

9. Retirement of Sergeant Ben Townsend (9/19)

10. Public comments and concerns (limit of five minutes per individual)

Yvonne Paci Ciquero made comments directed to Mrs. Hull on listening and transparency and expressed her opinions of the Board of Commissioners. She questioned why the work session meetings were cancelled this summer. Mrs. Hull commented that past boards held their work session meeting in the back room and no one was allowed to talk and that this Board made those meetings public. She added that Mrs. McNaney held open sessions during those dates for residents to speak one on one since the work session was consolidated into the business meeting.

Linda Smith asked about the Martin property and if there had been any action. Mrs. Hull said there are no proposals about the Martin property and there has been no further action.

Pat Pino said she attended the EAC meeting and asked if the Board is considering an ordinance requiring residents, businesses and all new homes to be built using all electric. Mrs. Hull replied no. Mrs. Pino asked if the Board is considering an ordinance banning single use bags and containers. Mrs. Hull said the Board is not considering that, but a survey was conducted to see how residents felt about this issue. Ms. Weaver announced that there is an upcoming informational session on plastic bags at the next EAC meeting on October 4th. She said the survey results will be shared at that time. Mrs. Zadell said the EAC is an advisory board and can't make decisions on their own, but they can offer recommendations for the Board to decide on. Mrs. Pino also asked about why the Township doesn't have leaf collection. Ms. Weaver said the Township explored the possibility of curbside leaf collection, but the bids came in significantly higher than some other municipalities by 100%-200% higher.

Peter Habib asked about whether the people living in the proposed 1500 Pennbrook Parkway would be using public transportation. Mrs. Hull said the only thing that has been decided was a zoning change and nothing has been proposed for land development at this time.

Michelle Vorwerk commented about the VMSC and the new proposed housing.

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11. Public Hearing – Ordinance 2023-01 - This will be held on September 19th

The purpose of this hearing is to hear comment pursuant to the consideration of Ordinance 2023-01, amending the Upper Gwynedd Township Code of Ordinances at Chapter 50 to provide for the regulation and licensing of alternative and massage therapy establishments.

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Brief explanation by Lauren Gallagher, Township Solicitor

Exhibits:

T1: Ordinance 2023-01

T2: Proof of Publication of Legal Advertisement – September 7, 2023

12. Request for public comment

13. Close of Public Hearing

14. Motion to approve Ordinance 2023-01

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### Departmental Reports

15. Manager's Report (Sandra Zadell)

Mrs. Zadell presented a two-year goals report for 2022/2023 covering high priority, secondary goals and future discussion points. All six of the high priority goals on the list have been completed or are in progress to be completed including establishing a Commissioners Scholarship Fund, grant acquisition, and focus on infrastructure, open space and traffic calming. All three of the secondary goals are in progress including updating zoning and SALDO and GSI recommendations. Five of the future discussion points have also been completed including reducing blight, increasing Township communications and creating additional walking paths.

16. Planning and Zoning Report (E. Van Rieker)  
As reported by Megan Weaver, Assistant Township Manager

- **ZHB 23-06 North Penn Auto** – Appeal of Zoning Officer to cease parking at 1601 Valley Forge Rd. (Wawa).  
This has been continued to September 26, 2023 and there is a stipulation to settle.
- **ZHB 23-22, 1720 Supplee Road** – Variance to locate an accessory structure in the front yard. Approved August 23, 2023.  
This was approved at the August meeting.
- **645 Sumneytown Pike**, minor 2-lot subdivision resubmitted for final plan approval.  
This is scheduled for BOC on September 19, 2023.
- **Wawa at Sumneytown & Valley Forge Rd.** - Proposed Land Development. Review underway.  
This is scheduled for the UGT Planning Commission on September 13, 2023.
- **825 Morris Road** – Proposed 4-lot Subdivision.  
This is scheduled before the UGT Planning Commission on September 13, 2023.
- **212 Church Road**, land development for a 34,000-sf storage building to be added to the Secure Storage facility.  
This will be placed on the October agenda.
- **ZHB 23-23, 826 Ridgeview Drive**, variance to permit a deck within the minimum rear yard.  
The applicant has withdrawn his ZHB application.

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17. Engineering Report (Nicholas Cross)  
As reported by Nicholas Cross, Township Engineer

- **Back to School** – As the 2023-2024 school year begins, we would like to remind residents to be extra careful when traveling through school zones. RVE is working with the Township to install flashing pedestrian crosswalks along Hancock Road near both Gwyn-Nor Elementary School and Pennbrook Middle School to further protect students, school staff, and crossing guards from vehicular traffic.

### Denise M. Hull, PRESIDENT Finance/Personnel/Administration

18. Staff Department Reports

This will be placed on the consent agenda

19. Public Meeting Minutes of August 22, 2023

This will be placed on the consent agenda

20. Announcement of Budget Work Session Dates  
October 18, 2023 at 1:00 pm  
October 23, 2023 at 4:00 pm

21. **DECISION:** Motion to approve the Proclamation for Hispanic Heritage Month

Mrs. Hull read the Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation.

Hearing no public questions or comments, upon motion by Mrs. Carter, seconded by Mrs. Simelaro, the motion was unanimously approved

22. Approval to award the Building Renovations Project to SB Conrad, Inc for the General Contract Bid in the amount of \$224,170, the Mechanical Bid to Clipper Pipe & Service, Inc. in the amount of \$41,000 and the Electrical Contract Bid to AN Lynch, Co. Inc. in the amount of \$100,650.

Mrs. Zadell said we allocated funding in 2022 to increase security in this building. She stated it is common in municipalities to secure their entrances. We added some ADA compliance to the plan and have increased the amount of office space to accommodate five more spaces. The project is overbudget as a whole and we will have to allocate \$266,000 in 2024 in addition to what was allocated for 2023. In the future, we will approve the addition of furniture for the project. Mrs. Hull clarified that we will not be over budget this year for this project. The timeline for construction is approximately 3 to 4 months.

Beth Miller asked if the meeting room front door will be upgraded to which Mrs. Zadell replied no. Mrs. Zadell said the last building renovation upgrade was done in 2004.

23. Approval of the 2024 Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO)

- Presentation by Chuck Friedlander (9/12)

Mr. Friedlander is the actuary for the Township. The actuary valuation covers the years 2021 and 2022. The valuation is for the Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) for funding of the Police Pension. In 2024, 2025 and 2026, there is no amortization because the pension is fully funded. Returns were strong in 2021, but bad in 2022 and it lost 17% of market value that year. We saw a gain of 2% of actuarial accrued liability. There was a contribution gain of \$244,000 during 2021 and 2022. The staff is recommending lowering the interest rate to

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6.5% from 6.75%. This is a more conservative assumption. Mrs. Zadell said the 2024 contribution is \$18,000 less.

### **Katherine D. Carter, Vice President** **Public Safety**

24. Approval of Resolution 21-2023, Recognizing October 8 – 14<sup>th</sup> as Fire Prevention Week

### **Ruth S. Damsker** **Zoning/Planning/Code Enforcement**

25. Approval of the Agreement for Encroachment onto Storm Sewer Easement for 131 W. Prospect Avenue

This will be placed on the consent agenda

26. Approval of Escrow Release #2 to the Pennington Property Group for Moyer Blvd/Weaver Ct. in the amount of \$138,607

This will be placed on the consent agenda

27. Approval of Resolution 22-2023: 645 Sumneytown Pike, 2-lot subdivision

Annie Neamand, attorney for the applicant from HRMML said we want to divide a large lot into two lots. She noted that nothing is changing on lot 1 as the existing homes will remain, but lot 2 will add a single-family detached dwelling. Ms. Neamand said they received relief from the ZHB that was subject to conditions. She stated those conditions have been met which were to add paved parking and to add some landscaping for privacy for a neighbor.

### **Liz K. McNaney** **Public Works/Parks/Recreation**

28. **DECISION:** Motion to ratify the Carnival Parking Agreement for our volunteers with WB Homes

Hearing no public questions or comments, upon motion by Mrs. McNaney, seconded by Mrs. Simelaro, the motion was unanimously approved.

29. Approval of the Home at Last Dog Rescue 5K Run on October 28, 2023 from 9 am – 12 pm.

Mrs. Zadell said both of these races are to held on the same day but the police didn't have any concerns about the impact on the roadways.

30. Approval of the Cardinal Hollow 5K Race on October 28, 2023 from 10:30 am – 12 pm.

Mrs. McNaney asked where they are going to park 100 cars for this race. She also asked how they are going to notify the residents. Mrs. Zadell will speak with the Parks and Rec Department and get answers regarding these two races for further discussion at the next meeting.

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31. Authorization to advertise the bid for the North Wales/Moyer Blvd. Pedestrian Crossing Signal

Mrs. Zadell said this is a grant funded program to put a mast arm with flashing lights for pedestrian crossing along the Wissahickon Trail at the intersection of North Wales Road and Moyer Blvd.

### Martha A. Simelaro Wastewater Treatment

32. **DECISION:** Motion to approve Resolution 18-2023: Towamencin Act 537 Plan Special Study

Ms. Gallagher said this is the Township's plan for providing public sewer to the Township. She said part of Upper Gwynedd Township is served by the Towamencin Municipal Authority (TMA). Ms. Gallagher noted that Towamencin Township is in the process of selling the TMA which requires an update to their Act 537 Plan. This explains the proposed changes to the plan that it will be serviced by PA American Water. Upper Gwynedd will also have to update their 537 Plan with the changes. Ms. Gallagher stated this does not approve the sale of the sewer plant in Towamencin.

Mark Connelly asked about the residents who are serviced by Towamencin. Mrs. Zadell said our residents will still pay the same rate at UGT residents regardless of whether the TMA is sold and serviced by someone else. Ms. Gallagher said Towamencin has a bulk rate that our residents are charged.

Hearing no public questions or comments, upon motion by Mrs. Simelaro, seconded by Mrs. Carter, the motion was unanimously approved

### Other Business

33. Approval of September 2023 Open Invoices (via roll call vote)  
34. Approval September 2023 Paid Invoices (via roll call vote)  
35. Call for Adjournment

Mrs. Carter said the UGFD was recently presented with the Exelon Employer Award from PECO. She thanked the

Mrs. Hull adjourned the meeting at 8:55 pm.



Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Brookley Zadell  
Secretary

Approved October 17, 2023