

**Buckingham Township Board of Supervisors**  
**Work Session**  
**Minutes**

The work session of the Buckingham Township Board of Supervisors was held January 24, 2024 in the Township Building, 4613 Hughesian Drive, Buckingham, Pennsylvania.

Present:	Paul Calderaio	Chairman
	Maggie Rash	Vice-Chairman
	Jon Forest	Member
	Dana S. Cozza	Township Manager
	Daniel Gray	Township Engineer
Not Present:	Luke Rosanova	Bucks County Planning Commission
	Craig A. Smith, Esquire	Township Solicitor
	Gary Weaver	Township Water/Wastewater Consultant

**4:30 p.m. Fire Company Funding**

The Presidents and Chiefs of Doylestown, Lingohocken and Midway Volunteer Fire Companies were present to discuss a request to increase in funding for their services.

President Dennis Kilfeather, Lingohocken Volunteer Fire Company, said the fire companies had provided a presentation to the Buckingham Township Board of Supervisors in August as well as to the other townships they service, and asked if there were any decisions made since that discussion.

Mr. Forest replied that the Board was considering placing a referendum on the fall ballot, but would prefer to not calculate the increase by millage as the value of mills is different in every township due to the assessed property value. Buckingham should not be subsidizing other townships. Mrs. Cozza said that Lingohocken had requested an increase of 3 mills, which comes to approximately 1.2 million dollars in Buckingham Township, which would be much more of an increase in cost to our residents than in other municipalities. Mr. Kilfeather argued that the increase would only be \$46 per household. Mrs. Rash disagreed, saying it would be higher.

Mr. Calderaio explained that a referendum would provide an opportunity to educate our residents of the services, versus markedly increasing a budget item without community input. Mr. Kreuter said their volunteers would help as much as possible to educate the residents.

Mrs. Cozza asked what dollar amount of money was needed by the fire companies. Mr. Forsythe, Midway Volunteer Fire Company, said they need to build up their accounts in order to replace necessary apparatus. He said Midway needs a new ladder truck, which can run from \$1.9 to \$4 million, two engines will need replaced in year 2032, and they just bought a rescue truck in 2018, so in 2038 a new one will be needed. He said there are state grants available at 2% interest, but the amount is limited. He explained if they take a loan for 25%, the interest rates are high. Chief David James, Lingohocken Volunteer Fire

Company, said there also are fuel costs, insurance, workers compensation and training expenses.

Mr. Paul Kreuter, President of Doylestown Fire Company, said they opted to lease a ladder truck and chief trucks and make a lease payment of \$174,000 a year. He said they need a local rescue truck, which cost \$700,000 in 2013. He added now a basic one is \$1.5 million dollars with no modifications.

Mr. Kreuter said that for the August meeting, they had provided the Board with the four most needed items, but they have a lot more expenses to cover, and offered to provide their budgets if wanted. Mr. Forsythe said Midway's budget for 2024 is over \$700,000.

Mr. Forest thought the lists provided in August were the total amount needed, not just the top four. Mrs. Cozza agreed that the budgets would be very helpful in determining the dollar amounts needed and to explain to the residents how much money is needed.

Mr. Steve Downs, a firefighter with Doylestown Fire Company explained that in making adjustments needed to keep pace with monetary expenses of inflation, growth of population, etc., they are now in a spot of needing to figure out how to get closer to funding their realistic needs. He said they actually save the communities about \$3.5 to \$4 million dollars a year by having the volunteer members.

Mrs. Cozza asked how they are doing in recruiting volunteers. Mr. Forsythe said at Midway they average 16 people per call, even for fire alarms. Mr. Kreuter said they average between 12-14 people. Mr. Kilfeather said Lingohocken's call volume is the lowest of the 3 companies, and they average 16-19 people per call and are doing well from a volunteer standpoint.

Mrs. Cozza said she sees a lot of alarm calls in the Lingohocken monthly statistics, and Mr. Kilfeather said yes, but they are not a bother. Chief James of Lingohocken said all calls are important, as they may be a real fire. Chief James explained that Wrightstown Township has an ordinance that if the same household has more than 3 false calls a year, the fire marshal asks them to fix the problem, and they may be issued a citation.

Mrs. Cozza asked how the request for funds is going with the other municipalities involved, and Mr. Kreuter said that Doylestown was having a Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) study conducted, and will present it to Doylestown Borough and Doylestown Township when completed. He said this is a comprehensive study by the state of the services they provide.

Mr. Downs said that Doylestown completed a survey of citizens and nobody seemed to know what credentials or capabilities were required for firefighters, and only 16% knew the location of firehouses closest to their home. He said they need to better inform the community. Mr. Forsythe asked if the township did a newsletter in the spring, could they have an article about the fire companies, and Mrs. Rash replied "yes".

Mrs. Cozza observed that as the dollar amount of money needed by the fire companies has not been specified, that all three fire companies' budgets, audits, and future needs, whether a capital fund investment or a loan should be provided. Mr. Calderaio urged them to be as realistic as possible. Mrs. Cozza said she, the Township Financial Director and the Board will review the documentation, discuss the needs, and then meet again with

the fire companies. Mr. Kreuter requested a March meeting to keep the momentum. March 14<sup>th</sup> was tentatively agreed upon.

### **Bucks County and Buckingham Township Environmental Advisory Commission Presentations of Energy Transition Plans**

Mr. Neale Dougherty, Director of Sustainability for Bucks County, presented a slideshow and discussion of the Sustainable Energy Partnership of Southeast Pennsylvania.

Mr. Dougherty explained that climate change is affecting Bucks County and the Commonwealth, producing water and rain in unexpected amounts, more than we can handle. He said in the summer of 2021 there were nearly a dozen tornadoes and several unnamed storms bringing unprecedented amounts of rain in microbursts of 2-1/2”-3” of rain in a very short time causing flash flooding.

Mr. Dougherty said in 2021 he worked with the county commissioners who adopted the “Ready for 100” resolution which proposes renewable electricity procurement by year 2035 and other energy sources by 2050. He explained that Bucks, Montgomery, Chester and Delaware Counties are big consumers of electricity. Mr. Dougherty said that Bucks County pays \$1.2 to \$1.8 million annually for electricity and that can be a budget shock when they are at the mercy of the market. He proposed that a 500,000 to 600,000 acre solar array would be ideal to serve all four county operations.

Ms. Stephanie Weisser, Amberton Way, asked if they decided on solar versus wind or other renewable sources, and Mr. Dougherty replied solar is more likely than wind, but it depends what is available at the marketplace.

Mr. Glenn Thomson, Lovering Drive, asked for a definition of sustainable energy sources. He said if he has electricity generated from Niagara Falls, that is sustainable, so why go to solar. Mr. Dougherty replied they want other options than fossil fuels.

Mr. Calderaio asked if they would consider nuclear energy as clean, and Mr. Dougherty replied he would, but was not sure of the County Commissioners. Mr. Dougherty explained they will buy what the marketplace provides in a competitive manner as they have to serve taxpayers and keep the rates low. He said nuclear has no new permitting, so they need alternatives to what is available.

Mr. Dougherty said that air quality has improved here in the last 10-15 years thanks to decommissioned coal plants being replaced with natural gas.

Mr. Terry Clemons, Buttonwood Drive, said that PJM (Interconnection LLC) is our marketplace, source from which we buy our electricity, and they maintain the grid.<sup>1</sup> He asked what a self-managed portfolio with PJM would mean. Mr. Dougherty said they would have a subaccount and procure periodically from PJM throughout the year versus going through a retail seller one time per year. Mr. Clemons asked if they could choose what source generates the energy, and Mr. Dougherty replied yes; who and when and for

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<sup>1</sup> PJM is a regional transmission organization (RTO) that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity in all or parts of 13 states and the District of Columbia, including Pennsylvania.

term of contract, but they have to be big enough to justify this. He said this has been done in Philadelphia and the Baltimore region.

Mr. Clemons asked what a self-managed portfolio does in rates of energy and money, and Mr. Dougherty replied it lets the county pick the time to buy and better partner with the provider for the kind of generation we want for the county facilities and operations. Mr. Calderaio asked if this was successful could other municipalities join in, and Mr. Dougherty replied not yet, but eventually it would be available for municipal partners, school districts and water authorities.

Mr. Dougherty said that solar is knocked for taking up farmland in the center of the state, however, it is just a fraction to what warehouses have taken. Mr. Donald Robb, Indian Walk, suggested we could choose less arable and less productive farmland for solar use, while keeping the most productive farmland at the same time.

Ms. Susan Sciacca, Antler Drive, said she has heard that solar arrays have a limited lifespan of 10 years and cannot be recycled. Mr. Dougherty said he has seen longer life panels. Mr. Forest said he has ones that should last 25 years.

Mrs. Rash asked Mr. Jim Miller about West Rockhill Township's system and Mr. Miller explained they have a 70.12 kilowatt system that is 100 feet long and 60' wide, 2 rows total. He said in a 3 year period they will have recouped 30% of their initial investment, with total recoup of cost in 9-10 years. He said he has been reading about institutes working with microwaves to break down the expired panels and getting 90% recovery rate.

Ms. Weisser said by changing the electricity production, how would that mitigate the stormwater. Mr. Dougherty replied that having a commitment to reduce the carbon footprint will reduce the rainfall, and hopefully reduce greenhouse emissions which contribute to the microbursts.

Mr. Dougherty ended the discussion by saying the Bucks County 2040 Comprehensive Plan was adopted in December and is available on the county website. He recommended everyone read it to see the climate change consequences and associated looming costs within.

Ms. Andrea Strout, Mill Road, provided a presentation on behalf of the Buckingham Township Environmental Advisory Commission titled "Why an Energy Transition Plan".

Ms. Strout said this plan will be continually revamped as technology improves. She said the Board of Supervisors are committed to these clean energy goals and previously passed a "Ready for 100" Resolution committing the township to these guidelines of showing the way to use clean energy versus using fossil fuels.

Ms. Strout said that she and Mr. Robb had attended many virtual meetings through the Clean Energy Strategic Planning (CESP) combined with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) to collect data on energy use and best practices.

Ms. Strout explained that 28 Southeast Pennsylvania municipalities have Climate Action Plans (CAPs).

Ms. Strout commended West Rockhill Township for providing their energy needs for local government buildings, parks, wells and traffic infrastructure through use of solar energy. She explained that Buckingham's transition is well under way, with ½ of the township electricity supplied by 100% clean sources via a PECO Clean Choice plan. She said this plan is also available for consumers.

Ms. Strout said that nothing is more expensive than doing nothing, and we cannot repair all that will get damaged in these microbursts and other related events. She said that the residents are critical to this plan as residential energy is the biggest slice of the pie.

Ms. Strout said that we need to create a climate action plan to stabilize our climate.

Mr. Jim Miller of West Rockwell Township said in their first 2-1/2 years using solar, carbon emissions were reduced by 431,000 lbs. He said they paid \$169,000 for the system and expect a return of over a half million dollars, and that in 2-1/2 years there has been absolutely no maintenance. He offered to share their paperwork, spec sheets and bid process. Mr. Calderaio asked if there was general maintenance and Mr. Miller said rain cleans them off, snow just melts, and they mow around them. Mr. Gray asked if they could have a meadow instead of mowing to help with wildlife, water management and clean the air. Mr. Miller said they designed their system to be 3' off the ground, and worked on native plants with the Perkiomen Nature Society and intend to let it sit. He said their system is built on top of a hill with the perfect southern view at a perfect angle. Mr. Forest said he mounted his 4 arrays on 8' posts so that he can get a tractor underneath. He said they rotate and can tilt.

Ms. Susan DeLone, Church Road, said that if the township wants residential participation they need to brainstorm and figure out ways to get the information out to the residents, as this affects every one of us and she would think that residents would feel empowered to do something. She offered to help disseminate what is needed, what is being proposed, and how to make something happen for the entire region.

Mrs. Rash said that both of the presentations would be posted on the township website for the residents to see.

*7:15 p.m. The Work Session adjourned.*

**Approved by the Board of Supervisors on the 28th day of February, 2024.**

**Buckingham Township Board of Supervisors**

Paul Calderaio, Chairman

Maggie Rash, Vice-Chairman

Jon Forest

Attest:

Dana S. Cozza, Township Secretary

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Lori Wicen.*