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UPPER MOUNT BETHEL TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2025 – 7:00 PM

*This meeting was held in person and live streamed through the Upper Mount Bethel Township Facebook page.

I.

Supervisor Bermingham called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

In attendance were Supervisor Bermingham, Supervisor Erlen, Supervisor Friedman, Supervisor Albert, Supervisor Eckman, Township Solicitor Karasek, and Township Manager Graziano.

II.

APPROVE THE AGENDA

MOTION by Supervisor Friedman to approve the agenda, seconded by Supervisor Albert. Vote: 5-0.

Supervisor Bermingham asked for a Moment of Silence for the 84th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor Day, observed annually on December 7th, which commemorates the surprise attack by Imperial Japan on the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, an event President Roosevelt called "a date which will live in infamy,"

III.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Charles Cole, Riverton Rd., commented on the DEP hearing on 12/17, on the air quality study at Power Plant.

Ron Angle, Million Dollar Hwy., commented on the proposed water study and if bids were received. Supervisor Friedman stated that this has been tabled until January.

Fran Visicaro, N. Delaware Dr., commented on the DEP hearing on the air quality study at the Power Plant. She wished that it would be available online because she does not want to travel to Wilkes-Barre.

IV.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Supervisor Erler wished everyone a Happy Holiday. Supervisor Erler announced the Chairs to the Table meeting is December 16th.

Supervisor Friedman announced the Supreme Court decision to allow the agenda to be amended the day of the meeting.

Supervisor Bermingham announced the Mt. Bethel FD ladies auxiliary will be making Christmas dinners for those in need. The Nbfd and MBFD will be doing Santa on the Fire Truck on December 20th, 4-7 and December 21st 2-5. An electronics recycling day will be scheduled.

Manager Graziano announced that there is only one official Township FB page, there are other ones out there but he will only respond on the official page. CodeRed is down so will be using FB and the Township website for notices. Just a reminder about the toter exchange form. Republic will be handing the exchanges. Republic will be sending out flyers on the 15th. Manager Graziano asked if there is a snowstorm that is pending or has occurred, please place your toters back off the road so the plow trucks do not hit them. Residents who plow their driveways, please do not push the snow into the middle of the roads. Tara Mezzanotte would like to schedule the Wild and Scenic meeting either January 20th or 29th.

V.

2026 Proposed Budget Discussion

Charles Cole, Riverton Rd. wanted to make the Board aware of possible fraudulent donation requests. The Board should do their due diligence in knowing where our donations are going towards. Charles spoke of the donation the Township gives to the Slate Belt Museum and the distribution to the three cemeteries. The Board should review their by-laws and mission statement before they make any donation.

Charles Baltic, Laurel Hill Rd. commented on the budget that reflects a significant expenditure for police department but not a consultant to facilitate the data center development.

There was a discussion on having a special meeting on having a police department, to hear how the residents feel. Supervisor Albert does not support having a police department. Supervisor Erler stated that many people he spoke to do not want a police department. There was a discussion on how much money can be moved (out of the budget) without having to advertise. MOTION by Supervisor Erler to decrease the

amount allocated to a police department in the budget by \$28,000, seconded by Supervisor Albert. Discussion: Supervisor Friedman asked why are we messing with the budget at the last moment. Manager Graziano stated his recommendation is to just leave the money where it is, it can be moved at a later time, without advertising. Ron Angle stated that when we first started working on the budget, everyone's input should have been considered. The Board will need to have a defined cost of having a full-time police department to present to the residents. Ron does not see a demand for a police department. Judy Henckel stated that it's a shame we keep running around in circles and waiting to the last moment to discuss changes in the budget when they should have been done at the beginning, nothing gets settled. Supervisor Bermingham called for a vote. Vote: 2-3. Motion fails.

Ron Angle stated that he does not see in the budget a 10-year \$350k contract with a firm he could not think of the name of. Supervisor Erler stated that it was Paul Soult, Soult Consulting, who we paid \$5,000 to open the doors for a consultant, who stated that it would take 10 years @\$350k to see the data center come to fruition. Ron stated that we certainly have people in our community that have the ability to serve on a committee that have an interest in the Township. Supervisor Erler would be in favor of a three-member group of township residents to take on the consultant position.

VI.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. November 10, 2025, Meeting Minutes
2. November 24, 2025, WS Meeting Minutes
3. Exonerations/Refunds

MOTION by Supervisor Erler to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Supervisor Albert. Vote: 5-0.

VII.

FINANCIALS

1. Bill List-Manger Graziano read the bill list totaling \$253,942.35. **MOTION** by Supervisor Friedman to pay the bills in the amount of \$253,942.35, seconded by Supervisor Albert. Vote: 5-0.

VIII.

TABLED ITEMS

1. Township Cell Phones-Supervisor Erler stated that this was an old policy put into place by the previous manager for all employees to have a cell phone for them to clock in/out on and to input their daily work. This program has been removed, and everyone has retained their cell phones. Manager Graziano proactively removed three cell phones. Supervisor Erler would like Manager Graziano to move forward with removing the bookkeeper cell phone, as well as the two other road crew members that are not in an administrative position. Manager Graziano stated that he had a long conversation with the Union about workplace conditions, you give something to someone, you just can't take it away, there's negotiations. They are prepared to file a grievance. Solicitor Karasek discussed the grievance process and in his experience, arbitrators generally favor

employees, not the employer. Supervisor Friedman stated that the phone is necessary, it's a computer in your pocket. Supervisor Friedman recommends keeping things the way they are. Supervisor Erler stated that his main goal going into this was to try to cut costs to the Township, but if this is going to go into a legal battle, it's not worth it. Supervisor Albert stated, in his opinion, every road crew member should have a work cell phone and not be using their personal phones. We should pursue getting cell phones for all the road crew. Stavros stated the employee policy should have language added that states Township assets are monitored.

IX.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Recess to Executive Session at 8:00 pm to discuss legal matters.

The meeting reconvened at 8:17 pm.

Solicitor Karasek stated that attorney/client confidential matter as well as the collective bargaining agreement with office/clerical staff. At the last meeting, the contract was approved providing Solicitor Karasek found no red flags. Solicitor Karasek has reviewed the agreement and has found no red flags.

X.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Supervisor Friedman to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 pm, seconded by Supervisor Albert. Vote: 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted by Cindy Beck, Recording Secretary