

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

December 25, 2019

AS THE YEAR ENDED the Board of Commissioners sprinted to the finish line passing the 2002 Budget (without a tax increase) and our Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), entered into a new energy savings contract, enhanced our walkability infrastructure projects, approved additional roadways for speed calming traffic humps and moved to advertise for adoption a new Zoning Code. These highlights – and a few more are the subject of this report.

ZONED OUT. In September, the Board was poised to consider adoption of the draft Zoning Code. However, faced with the reality that the Code still required refinement, my colleagues agreed to postpone the vote. The Institutional section, which was always known to be the most challenging, needed modifications; another review by our Solicitor was in order to clarify some perceived inconsistencies and we engaged the Montgomery County Planning Commission (who had been working on the Code) to participate with other professional planners, designers and engineers to test the Code. A new draft (version 4.0) was produced with edits as a result of these additional reviews. Key edits included setback requirements to ensure infill development was consistent with established patterns, impervious coverage in LDR3 was reduced to 28%, and lot widths in MDR1 for single-family dwellings and duplexes were increased. Sub-categories were added to the Institutional section so as not both accommodate the need for our valuable Institutions to modernize and yet preserve the residential communities on their respective borders. There remain some other adjustments to the Code, but with the anticipated date of a hearing to adopt not being until **February 26, 2020** there is time to make those adjustments. A full description of the changes in Version 4.0 can be found on the Township website and we continue to encourage your input.

WHAT'S IN YOUR (TOWNSHIP'S) WALLET? Each year we estimate expenditures and balance that against anticipated revenue to establish our budget and determine if we need increase taxes to meet our needs. In 2019 our revenue was \$69.9M which was \$5.6M higher than our budget. This was, in large part, due to 29% increase in business taxes collected and a due-on-sale payment of \$2M when One Ardmore was transferred earlier in the year. Meanwhile in 2018 our expenditures were about 1% (\$600K) lower than our budget.

Among our expenses personnel salaries (49%) and benefits (16.2%) are our biggest expense and with debt service comprising 14.1% of our budget we have little room

to maneuver with the remaining 21%. Another way to look at our expenses is as follows:

SERVICE	AMOUNT	%
Public Safety (Police/Fire)	\$29,708,723	42.1
Debt Service	\$9,991,944	14.1
Public Works	\$9,287,619	13.2
General Gov't	\$9,053,181	12.8
Libraries	\$4,723,591	6.7
Building & Planning	\$3,983,626	5.6
Parks & Rec	\$3,875,749	5.5

Of the local municipal taxes based on the average single family assessed value of \$356,000 (about \$600,000 fair market value) payments are approximately as listed below.

Taxing Authority	Amount	%	Increase since 2009
School	\$10,470	78.5	30%
County	\$ 1,370	10.3	43%
Township	\$ 1,492	11.2	14%

In 2020, our Budget does not require a tax increase for the **9th straight year** and more remarkably without compromise to the high quality of services to which we are accustomed.

A D-I-P into the CIP, Our Capital Improvement Plan looks at projects on a 6 year basis. After rating priorities, we have proposed \$35.2M worth of projects for 2020. These are funded by General Obligation Bonds along with Federal, State and County grants. The top 10 projects comprise 68% of the costs. The key points of those include:

- City Ave Transportation Area
- Rock Hill Rd. Belmont Ave expansion project
- Pennswood Bridge repair

Strom Water Management (compliance with MS4)
Rototilling roads

BUMPY RIDE. As part of our plan to address Township wide traffic issues, namely, congestion and speeding, the Board approved the second placement of speed humps along River Road. In order to qualify the roadway need meet standards including approval of 80% of affected households, speed limit not more than 25mph, 1,000 feet of linear road, and an analysis of grading and curves. Presently, there are 2 other applications under review.

In 2018 our Traffic Safety Unity issued 9,236 citations along with 4,682 written warnings and 6,693 faulty equipment notices. There were also 2,258 crashes. The 2019 figures have not been completed but in the first half of the year there were 13,476 traffic monitoring posts which average 73 per day.

Only in Pennsylvania is it illegal for municipalizes to use radar (which is 1950's technology) as speed enforcement. In conjunction with other Township Commissioners and the Eastern Pennsylvania Township Commissioner Association of which I have served as president, we have worked to have Harrisburg lift that restriction. Some municipal police have resorted to holding hand held hairdryers out their car windows to trick drivers. (Can't make this stuff up). A bill has passed the house and is in the Senate. Our Board passed a resolution supporting passage of the legislation permitting use of radar even with its restrictions. We are still awaiting Harrisburg to act.

"LATE TO BED, LATE TO RISE . . ." NOT HOW I REMEMBER IT. In response to studies advocating later starts for high schoolers to coincide with their development, the School District is considering staggering school start times. Admitting that I am "old school" (no pun intended) and although I have read some of the reports, I still wonder what happened to turning off the phone, computer and TV and going to bed earlier. Nevertheless, the decision when to commence classes rests with the School Board, so I shall remain in my lane. In that lane, however, would be busses. If such a plan is adopted the School Board anticipates 12-20 more busses are necessary and at the moment the site to park those busses is the St. Justin's church. That would mean busses in and out as well as drivers for those busses. Since apparently the Church is not ADA compliant the proposal also includes a trailer for drivers being parked there as well. I am sure the School Board is also considering the ramification on parents and their work schedules and post school coverage which sometimes is dependent upon older siblings and the impact

of after school activities. No decision has been made as of yet, but plans are being considered in case the adjustment is forthcoming. Your questions and comments will be important in this process.

THANKS IS NOT ENOUGH. On December 18, the Board tried to acknowledge the combined 36 years of service of Commissioners Liz Rogan, Brian McGuire and George Manos. Each in their own right has been a significant contributor to many initiatives and accomplishments such that listing them all or trying to say thanks was an impossible task. They have not only been colleagues but over the years have become friends. While true to form in Lower Merion they will be replaced with three highly qualified individuals, we will miss their dedication and expertise and fortunately I know where they live.

SEASON WISHES. Hope you are enjoying your holidays with a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah and good wishes for the New Year (with an Eagle victory over the Giants in between).

Dan

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