

RUSSELL TOWN HALL

June 11,

2023

The Chair, Ms. Port called the meeting to order at 9:02 am. Trustees Rambo and Mueller were present. Fiscal Officer Karen Walder and the Board Administrator were also present.

The following Department Head was present: Road Superintendent Gene Layne.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

FISCAL: The Fiscal Officer advised the Board that the legal notice for the budget workshops was in the paper last Thursday, and the public hearing will be June 20th. Mrs. Walder noted that the Township's budget hearing with the County will be on Monday August 19th.

Mrs. Walder started the workshop in the "all" section of the budget binders and noted that the Road Department has the most revenue sources, including license tax, permissive tax, and gas tax. In addition, the Road Department has the most funds of any department.

Mrs. Walder moved to the "revenue" page to show that all four levies for the Road Department are "continuing" at a ninety-eight percent collection which is about one point five mills to be expected in 2025. In addition, there is an OPWC loan payment of twenty-five thousand dollars.

The next page the Fiscal Officer reviewed was the "cash reserve", which showed the operations and maintenance cost was just over one million for the Road Department a minimum of twenty-five percent is used to figure the amount of cash reserves the department is recommended to have. The Fiscal Officer noted that the "O & M" cost have gone down from 2022 to 2023.

ROAD: The Road Superintendent asked if the department wanted to raise the levied money amount and if the levy didn't pass would the department lose the levy that was being replaced? The group thought that the original levy would stay in place.

The Fiscal Officer reviewed the ClearGov five-year capital requests with the Board. She advised that the cost to fix the landslide on Hillbrook will cut into the amount of funding available for paving in 2025.

Trustee Rambo stepped out of the meeting at 9:24 am.

Trustee Rambo returned to the meeting at 9:26 am.

Mrs. Walder noted to the Board that the amount of funds budgeted for the Road Departments building reserves does not align with the Study's recommendations. Mr. Rambo suggested that the Reserve Study was old and out of date so the amounts in it weren't helpful and didn't need to be included in the budget binder. Mrs. Walder disagreed. Mr. Rambo discussed with the Board that they need to decide on whether to fix/renovate the current Road Garage or build a new one. This has been a discussion for a few years, and they need to decide and move forward with it for budget planning. The Board instructed the Road Superintendent to look into options and get a viability study on the property next to the Police Department to see if there was even a possibility of using it for a new Road Garage. They suggested hiring an architect to help with this and the possible design of a new building. The Trustees would like to budget fifty thousand dollars from the General Fund for a study in 2025.

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Mr. Rambo made the motion to authorize Road Superintendent Gene Layne to pursue planning for a new Road Garage and investigate the use and cost of site one and two. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Road Superintendent then suggested that the current road facility could be used for salt storage and possibly other indoor storage. The Fiscal Officer noted that would still require a level of maintenance expenditure for the current building in addition to the costs of a new facility. The Board asked the Fiscal Officer to suspend funding the building reserve account through 2029.

The Fiscal Officer asked the Road Superintendent if the needs of the department have changed that much that they need a new larger facility. The Road Superintendent answered yes, and they currently don't have a bunk room for overnight plowing, they don't have showers, there is no lift for the truck to be on while being fixed, and there are multiple pieces of equipment stored outside due to not enough space in the building. Mr. Rambo pointed out that health and safety standards are different now than they were when that building was purchased. The Fiscal Officer advised that these points should be made to the architect that will conduct the study. Mrs. Walder also advised the Board that funding could be reserved for a new building, however that would be a different fund from the current building reserve fund.

Mrs. Walder moved on to the topic of the vehicle reserve fund, stating that if the Road Department stays on the current vehicle replacement schedule, the fund will go negative in 2027 and lease purchase options should be considered.

Mrs. Walder moved to the five years look ahead and advised that for 2025 the Road Department was fine but went into the red from 2026 – 2029. She noted that road paving is a large need for the department, and the township should consider no interest OPWC loans for future paving projects. The Road Superintendent noted there are still four remaining chip & seal roads in the Township.

The Road Department budget workshop ended at 10:10 am.

The Police Department budget workshop started at 10:15 am.
Chief Swaidner was in attendance.

POLICE: Chief Swaidner informed the Board that the workstation request for 2025 was moved up a year and NOPEC grant funding was used for this item.

Vehicle reserves was the next discussion, and the Chief would like to stay on the rotation for vehicles, the current schedule is working well for the department. The Chief advised that the car laptops were scheduled to be replaced in 2026 and he would like to move that to 2025 and there are some hardware failures that need to be addressed, and the LEADS system the department uses will require Windows 11 starting in 2025, the current laptops can't support that upgrade.

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Ms. Port asked the Chief what the plan for body cameras was. He advised that the in-car cameras will be replaced in 2027 and hopefully at that time body cameras can be integrated with the car cameras. MDT currently works with body cameras but not the current car cameras, and hopefully in the future they will all work together. The Chief explained that there doesn't seem to be a need in our area at the moment and he is waiting for the Sheriff's department to start using body cameras so they can give our department recommendations. Ms. Port asked if the lack of body cameras were affecting cases, which Chief Swaidner advised that no case has been lost yet due to not having them.

Chief Swaidner advised the Board that the rifle gun update on the reserve sheet was different from the shot guns which were replaced with pepper ball guns. He also has a pistol upgrade that will go from an iron sight system to a red dot system.

Chief Swaidner informed the Board that the tasers are five years old and the software will be obsolete in 2025, and they will need to be replaced. The Board asked how often the tasers are used, and the Chief advised they aren't used often but they are a good resource for the Officers on duty. The Board asked what the range of use for the teasers is, and the Chief replied that it is twenty-five feet.

Mrs. Walder pointed out that the SSO funding is included in the Police Department budget through 2029.

The Board moved to the discussion of the additional garage for the Police Department. The Board was advised that the budgeted amount is one-hundred thousand dollars, and quotes for the metal building with no site work are around twenty-nine thousand dollars. Chief Swaidner is trying to keep the total cost under seventy-five thousand dollars, to avoid going out for public bid if possible.

Ms. Port advised the Police Chief that with the new property tax increase the Board might consider reducing a Police levy on the condition that the General Fund pays the department back the amount the levy is reduced by. Ms. Port noted that last year a Road levy was used and she didn't want to use the same department two years in a row. The Chief advised that the Board considers the possibility that a department might need to go for a levy next year and advised not to reduce that department's levy. He advised that will be confusing to the residents if a levy is lowered, and next year that department is asking for a new levy. Ms. Port said they will discuss this more in the General Fund workshop but wanted to give the Chief a heads-up.

The Fiscal Officer advised the Board that the 2025 budget shows the Police Department below the recommended cash reserves. The vehicle reserve fund will be funded at the recommended amount and the building reserve will have no contribution in 2025.

Ms. Port advised that in the future she will want to look into the Police Departments salary and benefits, as that is a major cost for the department. Chief Swaidner asked the Board to remember that the department is under a contract. Mr. Mueller asked how staffing at the department is. Chief Swaidner advised the Board that if the department goes out for a levy next year and gets it, he would like to add a full-time Detective to the staff.

The Fiscal Officer noted that the retirement reserve account has been created and funded. She also noted that the "O & M" for the department was down from 2022 to 2023.

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Capital items not in the budget include Flock Cameras. The Chief noted that Russell is the only community in the area without them. He noted that the total yearly cost was around twelve thousand dollars. The Board said this could be a General Fund item. The other item not in the budget is low band radios. The Chief advised the Board that they could be beneficial to the department as a backup option if the County's system goes down. The Board thinks this item can also be considered a General Fund cost, along with radios for the Fire Department also. The Board estimated thirty thousand dollars for both projects.

Mrs. Walder asked the Chief if he could speak on the camera system used for active shooters, and if it is recommended for the Community Building. The Chief noted that the County has this system in place, and he highly recommends it for schools, and could be a benefit to the Community Building if funding is available. He explained to the Board that the camera software detects a firearm on a person if it is visible, it will not detect one under clothing, in a bag, or concealed in any way. The advantage is that you would know about the firearm before the person entered the building.

The Police Department budget workshop ended at 11:24 am.

Mr. Rambo made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 am.

Kristina Port, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Dorka