

**WILLISTOWN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING MINUTES**  
**611 SUGARTOWN ROAD, MALVERN, PA**  
**APRIL 9, 2018 AT 7:00 PM**

The Regular Meeting of the Willistown Township Board of Supervisors came to order at 7:00 PM. Supervisors Robert T. Lange, William R. Shoemaker, and Barbara L. Handelin were present. Also present were Township Manager David R. Burman, Chief of Police John M. Narcise, and Sergeant Detective Jeffrey M. Heim.

Mr. Lange led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, followed by a moment of silence for our troops.

**Announcements**

**New Business**

Mr. Shoemaker moved to approve the minutes of March 12, 2018. Mr. Lange seconded the motion. There were no comments from the Board or the public, and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Handelin moved to approve the minutes of March 26, 2018. Mr. Shoemaker seconded the motion. Kirk Lindvig of Boot Road noted that the minutes have not been posted to the website. Mr. Shoemaker reported that the minutes are not posted to the website until after they are approved. There were no further comments from the Board or the public, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Shoemaker moved to approve the list of expenditures and Interfund transfers dated April 9, 2018. Ms. Handelin seconded the motion. There were no questions from the Board or the public, and the motion carried unanimously.

Chief Narcise reported on recent activities of the Willistown Police Department. He announced that Officer Bills would be present for the Board's meeting on April 30<sup>th</sup> to make an educational presentation about traffic studies and related matters. The Chief also announced that the Department would sponsor a Narcan Training session on May 30<sup>th</sup> at Sugartown Elementary School.

Chief Narcise introduced Sergeant Detective Heim who reported on a recent investigation into an alleged burglary and arson incident at the Redhound Grill on Paoli Pike. After an exhaustive investigation including the execution of several search warrants and examination of cell phone records, the suspect is in custody and there is no danger to the community. Sergeant Detective Heim reminded residents to lock the doors to their homes and cars. He stated that door-to-door solicitors are required to have a permit issued by the Police Department. The Board discussed recent phone and other scams, and reminded residents to be vigilant and to report suspicious activities. Residents Jack McGinley, Mike Kerr, and Gene Kerm participated in the discussion.

**Further Discussion of Gun Violence Prevention**

Mr. Lange informed those in attendance that the Board would accept additional comments from the public concerning the proposed Resolution pertaining to gun violence prevention. Everybody who wishes to speak will have an opportunity to do so, but each speaker will be limited to three minutes.

Mr. Shoemaker announced that, in accordance with the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, any attendee has the right to make an audio and or video recording of this public meeting. Mr. Shoemaker asked that anyone who is recording the meeting, as a courtesy to their neighbors in attendance, inform the Board if they are

Ann Colling of Old Covered Bridge Road stated that she agrees with Marie Kania. She asked if this could be put to a vote because discussing this issue is not getting us as far as she would like as quickly as she would like.

Mahala Renkey of Tulip Drive stated that she has attended many meetings of the Board of Supervisors over the years. There are many interests, all well intentioned. However, Ms. Renkey is concerned that there are other matters to come before the Board. How do we get it off the Agenda so the Board has time to address those other relevant matters?

Danielle Higgins of East Boot Road expressed her feelings that we need to focus the discussion on mental health. As a relatively young person, she believes that children need a place to go for help. She stated that she is for guns, and for gun safety. Criminals break the law. The actions described in the proposed Resolution won't help. Schools offer classes in health, but this is physical health. There needs to be a discussion of mental health.

Gene Kern of Harvey Lane stated that gun safety is paramount in gun ownership. Free gun locks are available from the Chester County Sheriff's office. Mr. Shoemaker responded that gun locks will be available from the Willistown Township Police Department very soon.

Norman MacQueen of Shepherd Road stated that he is not in favor of the proposed Resolution. He stated that he was married at age eighteen and his first child was born when he was just twenty years old. If the proposed Resolution were adopted, Mr. MacQueen asked Ms. Handelin how old he would have to be to purchase a gun to protect his family. Ms. Handelin stated that it was not her Resolution, that it was put forth by a group of residents. Mr. MacQueen expressed his concerns that the proposed Resolution, if adopted, would be the voice of Willistown. Mr. MacQueen asked how can it be the voice of all of Willistown without a clear consensus? Ms. Handelin responded that the Resolution came to the floor as a mechanism for sharing views. Mr. Shoemaker reminded those in attendance that the Resolution has not been moved for adoption or seconded. Mr. MacQueen stated his feeling that the Resolution cannot be considered without details. He expressed his opinion that Mr. Handelin proposed the Resolution and that is the reason it is being discussed. He feels the Board is misguided if the Resolution is adopted.

Betsy Allinson asked how an item is placed on the Agenda. Mr. Shoemaker responded that no individual Supervisor has control of the Agenda. He stated that the Board feels this is a pertinent discussion, without taking a position one way or the other.

Missy Schwartz of Laurel Circle stated she is in support of gun safety, although the problem with gun violence is that it is not usually committed by people who follow the rules. Something does need to be done to help people.

Chief Narcise commented that mental health is a problem that is near and dear to his heart. He cited statistics that suggest a high number of incarcerated males have some sort of personality disorder. He reminded those in attendance that the public should always reach out if they feel someone is having problems. Police officers are trained to handle these matter delicately and with compassion. He stated that there needs to be more funding to help those with mental illness and we need to remove the stigma so more people will seek help. Kids sometimes have nowhere to turn. Parents are often not prepared to handle mental health issues.

Cathy Whitman thanked the Board for the opportunity to better understand each other. She would like to see some agreement that some weapons should be controlled a little better.

Sandi Richard thanked the Board and especially Ms. Handelin. She feels that this is not a waste of time. She is supportive of the Resolution and supportive of the Chief's comments. She is disheartened by what she believes to be hostile views expressed by some residents. She would like to see a forum of some sort to follow up on the Chief's comments. She stated that she would be willing to volunteer to facilitate the discussion.

Dan Higgins of East Boot Road expressed his feeling that mental health is the issue. Even if all guns were removed, folks will find another way to achieve their objectives.

Diane Weltman of Line Road discussed the mental health issue, stated that there is a difference between the disenfranchised and those who are suffering from mental illness.

Gene Kern of Havey Lane stated that he would be willing to volunteer to teach a quarterly gun safety course.

Kim Mack of Rollingview Drive asked about the age for owning a gun.

Jim Kennedy stated that he was proud of the respect shown by those who have attended the meetings to discuss this issue. He stated that there are common threads among the speakers, but finger pointing often drives people apart. He is in favor of addressing the mental health and gun safety education topics. He is not a fan of the Resolution because he doesn't feel it will make any impact. The areas of commonality, he feels, are stopping the violence, addressing mental health, and providing additional opportunities for education.

At the conclusion of the public comments, Mr. Lange asked that the following statement be read into the minutes:

"I want to thank Mr. Shoemaker for running the last supervisor meeting held on March 26th. As some of you may know, I was away in sunny, hot Belize for 2 weeks recharging my batteries and getting ready for a new farming season. I have to be honest, it was great getting away. I turn my phone off when I leave the U.S. and don't turn it back on until I am back in the states. I arrived back in Philadelphia just as Villanova won the NCAA basketball championship.

The next day I started the long process of catching up on my mail/ e-mail and phone messages. My box was full of letters written by township residents on our proposed gun control resolution. I read them all and then the minutes of the last supervisor meeting held in my absence. I feel compelled to respond. I am sure some of you are going to be disappointed in what I have to say, while others will be in agreement with my opinions.

I was elected as a supervisor back in 1997. I was not the endorsed candidate and enjoyed beating my opponent. When I won, I wanted to come in and make significant changes. I ran on an open space/farm preservation platform. I was able to orchestrate our open space bond referendum asking residents would they be willing to pay an extra 1/8<sup>th</sup> of 1 % for the sole purpose of securing open space to be protected forever. The referendum passed by over 82% of the residents voting in favor of such a tax

increase. It should be noted that this is the only tax increase that Willistown has had since I took office back in 1997. I saw a way to make a difference and I made it happen.

This past election, the residents of the Township elected a new supervisor. Barbara wanted to make that same difference that I did when I was first elected. I understand her desire to make change for the betterment of our community. However, and it is a big however, we as township supervisors have absolutely no authority in changing gun control legislation....NONE. We were not elected to debate gun control, immigration, abortion or any other national issue. We were elected to run a municipality as smoothly as possible. I am proud to say the State of Willistown Township is as strong as it has ever been since I have been associated with it. Moody's Investor Service gave us an outstanding report.

Our police department has been run smoothly and effectively under our Chief and lieutenant. They have been responsive, caring and committed to our township residents.

Our office administration has kept the day to day business of running our township their top priority. They have been responsive to our residents.

Our road department, under the guidance of Bill Hagan has kept our roads clear of ice and snow like none of the other surrounding townships.

Finally, a big shout out to our township manager, Dave Burman, who is responsible for making our township run as smoothly as it does.

In the letters I received, several people mentioned that 'special interests' were having a strong say in our proposed gun resolution. I have to agree. I want to read a letter that bears this out.....

*"On March 12, the Willistown Supervisors held an open discussion with residents on a Resolution For Stronger Protections Against Gun Violence. The hostile discussion was dominated by intense, angry, gun rights activists who live right here in our township and heckled the few of us who spoke up in favor of the resolution.*

*If you are a proponent of safe schools, please help by doing the following:*

*Email All Of The Supervisors*

*Send a heartfelt email that explains exactly why you believe we should have a Resolution on Gun Safety. You can include personal stories, fears for our future, or stats on gun violence.*

*Attend The Next Gun Safety Discussion at the Supervisors Meeting*

*Numbers matter, and we were vastly outnumbered at the last meeting. Please attend and if you're willing, speak for 3 minutes on the topic. We need to show up to be heard.*

*The next discussion on the resolution has yet to be scheduled.*

*Let's show our community that we want to support and protect our kids."*

I realize if we do not pass this resolution that some people will say that not in favor of protecting our school children and that this will be a potential issue for the next election. Again, I reiterate, we have no authority in regard to this issue.

I want to read another note I received:

*"Hello:*

*I was at the Board of Supervisors meeting where the poorly written, un-documented resolution for what was discussed. This email is out of line and full of falsehoods. First, it was a healthy discussion, no name calling, people were passionate but not angry or yelling. Ever person who wanted to speak was given 3 minutes of time and the Board of Supervisors would not allow people to interrupt. It was quite well done.*

*It doesn't help matters when someone choose to make statement in an email that are out and out wrong.*

*And, you need to do some homework as you are asking the Board of Supervisors to approved something and imply action which is not of their authority to do.*

*Write and call Congress. I personally would like to have all assault rifles banned and all of them collected and ground into dust. No one needs an assault rifle.*

*Mahala J Renkey"*

It is easy to get people motivated for good causes. If you really want to be heard - take your passion and enthusiasm to your state reps and senators in Harrisburg or your federal reps and senators in Washington. These are the folks that can make change. It is easy to write a letter to your supervisor or attend a meeting. Where it becomes more challenging is taking your message to Harrisburg or Washington where your voice will be heard.

People ask me, 'What does it take to be a Township Supervisor?' My answer is, 'The ability to listen and to use your common sense.' Throughout my career as a Supervisor, I have always tried to do everything in the best interest for the Township. I have had the advantage over the years of residents seeking me out at my farm market and discussing township issues. I always listen and make suggestions on how their issues can be addressed. I always say that if you are earnest in making a change, come to a supervisor meeting and speak your mind at citizens comments. That way, your voice will be heard and appropriate actions can be taken. I don't want to end on a down note, BUT one letter in particularly disappointing and disheartening. I choose to share it with you now and will read it to you

*"Hi Bob,*

*I am a Willistown resident (Four Winds Lane) reaching out in support of the resolution that was presented to the BOS on common sense gun reform. I could site many statistics and points as to why this should be considered. The bottom line is this resolution and the influence it can have at the state and local level is to do nothing more than protect our citizens, and very specifically the children of this country. I am more than disappointed that so many of our citizens (especially those locally that appeared at Tuesday's meeting) parrot the NRA and act like this is about taking away their precious guns. It's not. I believe in the Second Amendment. My father was a hunter and gun collector and an NRA member back when it wasn't a political scam. I also believe that an AR-15 in the hands of the mentally ill is a very complicated problem to solve. First and foremost though, that gun needs to come out of their hands.*

*Sign the resolution, Bob. I've spent a lot of time over the years at your farm and I always held you in the highest regard. I believe that you are capable of doing the right thing. Please don't disappoint me - or my kids. Protect the children that come to your farm every spring, summer, and fall. Or choose not to, and you will no longer see my family there, or any kids with any organization I'm a part of. Times are changing and especially here in Willistown Township. Stand with the residents, protect our children, and do the right thing.*

*I trust and appreciate that you'll take this request into serious consideration.*

*Most sincerely,  
Becky Spiess"*

Well....it is sad that friends/neighbors feel the need to threaten my vote and my business when I have no control over the issue. I understand the need for some kind of gun control, but unfortunately we do not accomplish it at the township level and some folks need to understand that."

#### **Citizens' Comments**

Mahala Renkey of Tulip Drive expressed her concerns with the recent application of the Greater Chester Valley Soccer Association for a variance to permit lighting on the soccer fields on Line Road. She stated that many homeowners are opposed to the proposed lighting. She also stated that the Soccer Association provides programming for both children and adults, not just children.

Kirk Lindvig lives near the GCVSA Fields and expressed opposition to the proposed lighting.

Gene Kern of Harvey Lane expressed concerns about noise emanating from a generator of the REMED property in Malvern Borough. Mr. Burman stated that he would inquire with the Malvern Borough Manager.

#### **Next Meeting**

The next regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors will be held on Monday, April 30, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the Municipal Meeting Room at 688 Sugartown Road, Malvern, PA. However, the Township may announce an alternate location for the meeting. Please visit the Township's social media sites and website for updates.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



David R. Burman  
Secretary