



TOWNSHIP OF SPRING

Board of Supervisors

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VISION MEETING MINUTES APRIL 4TH, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Smith called the Vision Meeting to order on Friday, April 4th, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. in the Public Meeting Room of the Township of Spring Administration Building, located at 2850 Windmill Road, Spring Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania.

ROLL CALL: Upon roll call, Supervisors Stuck, Kocher, Wertz, and Smith were present. Supervisor Royer joined by Teleconference. Also present were John Groller, Dean Murray, Mary Rossi, Jen Bensinger, Jeremy Baez-Reyes, Chief Hackman, Deputy Fire Chief Fritz, Troy Hatt, Judy Houck, Paul Darrah, Aaron Wozniak, Chief Powell, Deputy Chief Brock, Jason Reichert, Dan Becker, Esq, and Jay Vaughan.

AGENDA AMENDMENTS: None

OPEN TO THE FLOOR: None

ACTION ITEMS FOR APPROVAL:

Below are all items requiring action by the Board. Comments and discussion points are listed under the corresponding item.

1. Approval of Design Proposal for Wheatfield Road Stabilization
Mr. Reichert stated that the staff is working with Great Valley Consultants (GVC) to prepare a bid package for the Wheatfield Road Stabilization Project. GVC recommends working with Earth Engineering Incorporated to develop the retaining wall design for \$9,500.00.
2. Formal Offer of Employment-Full-Time Finance/Customer Service Administrative Assistant. Mr. Groller requested approval to extend a formal offer of employment to Jennifer Buck, effective April 7th, 2025, at a starting hourly rate of \$26.30.
3. Reception Window/Glass Door for Codes Office
Mr. Murray requested approval to hire H&M Glass, who had the lowest quote of three (3) obtained to install the reception window/glass door in the Codes Office, for \$6,210.00.
4. Conditional Offer of Employment-Full-Time Administrative Assistant- Parks and Recreation Department: Mr. Groller requested approval to extend the conditional offer of employment at a starting rate of \$27.00 per hr., contingent upon completing all necessary background checks and screening. Mr. Groller confirmed for Mr. Stuck that the difference in the hourly rate in the two administrative assistant positions is based on the job descriptions and requirements.

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ACTION ITEMS FOR APPROVAL: (Continued)

Motion to approve Action Items #1-4 was made by Mr. Stuck and seconded by Mr. Wertz. Upon roll call, All Supervisors present voted affirmatively. MOTION CARRIED

TOWNSHIP VISION STATUS UPDATE

Mr. Groller stated that the new style for this meeting will be a PowerPoint Presentation and presented the following updates:

Slides 1 & 2: The Township's Mission and Vision Statements adopted on May 26th, 2015, and the Township Vision Project Status dated May 24th, 2024.

Slide 3: Secure and Control Access to Both the Yerger Boulevard and Goose Lane Yard Waste Sites:
Goose Lane Yard Waste Site: The site has been secured for over a year, and operations are going well. The volume of waste disposed of at the site was significantly less in 2024 than before the site was secure. The site was only cleaned out (ground) one time in 2024. The total project cost was approximately \$440,000.00, with just over \$302,000.00 paid with State Recycling Grants. Mr. Groller said that at roughly \$20,000-\$30,000 per grind, looking at 4 or 5 grinds, it won't be long until you see the Township's return on the investment.

Yerger Boulevard Yard Waste Site: Staff have been working to secure the site and are waiting for a piece of IT equipment to communicate and operate access controls. Fencing, controls, and security cameras have been installed; total costs are approximately \$110,000.00. An additional gate and fence will be installed on the Reedy roadside at the entrance of plant three, which will be limited to employee access only. Jersey barriers will be relocated across from the silver shed where the old driveway was. This site was ground 5 times in 2024 at \$135,000.00 and once in 2025. The Township will apply for grant reimbursement in 2026 for this location. To date, almost 1,8000-yard waste access cards have been issued.

Slides 4 & 5: Mr. Groller reviewed pictures and upgrades at the sites.

Slide 6: One Library/Library Commitment and Construction: Mr. Groller said that staff and Library representatives met multiple times in 2024 to discuss the library's interest in acquiring additional space, funding, and outfitting. The Township's funding contribution to the library for 2025 remained the same as in 2024 at \$230,000.00.

Slide 7: Proceeding with the Development of an RFP for the Update of the Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan in Accordance with DCNR Standards: Updates of action that occurred are listed. The most recent update during the DCNR review is a recommendation to complete and include a walkability study in the plan. The changes are being made, and the tentative adoption date is April 28th, 2025.

Slide 8: Proceeding with Developing an RFP for Creating a Master Site Plan for Kline's Creek Park in Accordance with DCNR Standards: Mr. Groller said that Ms. Houck has been heavily involved in working on the Kline's Creek RFP and the West Wyomissing playground park that the Township recently acquired. The pre-final design is complete, and the consultants are currently working on the first draft of the written plan.

TOWNSHIP VISION STATUS UPDATE (Continued)

Slide 9: Proceeding with the Development of an RFP for the Creation of a Master Site Plan for the Shoener Lake Property in Accordance with DCNR Standards: On July 24th, 2023, at the Board of Supervisors Meeting, this site was tabled as a potential park site. Ms. Smith stated that she would like some type of passive park at the location, such as the placement of benches.

Slide 10: Proceed with Developing an RFP for Creating a Master Site Plan for the West Wyomissing Property as Soon as Required: Mr. Groller stated that Phase 1 will include one and a half basketball courts, a shaded seating area, accessible paths, fencing, and a native vegetative buffer. \$350,000.00 has been budgeted in 2025 for these items. A DCNR Park Development grant application in the amount of \$1,012,941.00 was submitted on April 1st, 2025. Mr. Groller noted that the grant would cover 50% of the project's total cost, estimated at \$2,025,882.00.

Slides 11 & 12: Evaluate the Opportunity for a Festival Community Type of Event: The Parks and Recreation Department has been working on the Re-Organization Plan adopted on January 27th, 2025. The new plan includes a part-time special events coordinator position, which, when filled, the Department will revisit the festival portion of this vision item. In March 2025, Township staff and Mr. Stuck met with the Lion's Club to begin planning a community car show event for Fall 2025. The plan is for the event to be held behind the Township Administrative Building on Windmill Road. The Township is seeking sponsors for the event. The Board discussed using sponsorship donations from businesses for an opportunity to provide Playground Program scholarships.

Ms. Smith said she would like another event hosted by the Township to honor the Country's 250th anniversary.

Slide 13: Safe Route to Parks: As requested at the May 2024 Vision Meeting, the word "SLOW" was painted on the streets near the entrances to Drexelwood Park.

Slide 14: Penn Avenue Revitalization Plan: Staff is reviewing the "old study" and incorporating the previously prepared Howard Sidewalk Study. Sidewalks for the 1st block of Howard Street are being evaluated with the planned Penn Avenue sidewalks. The Green Light Go grant has been awarded to the Township. Updates included under the grant are all signals, traffic loop and timing, and pedestrian crossings and accessibility.

Slides 15-19: Maintain and Enhance Employee Relations and Communication: Mr. Groller said that a lot has been going on regarding staffing in the past year.

- The Parks and Recreation Department restructuring will include a full-time administrative assistant and multiple part-time positions.
- The Township is recruiting to fill the Assistant Engineer position due to Jason Reichert's promotion.
- The Township completed the Police Chief Succession Plan.
- Developing a Business Office Succession Plan and cross-training plan.
- Created an Administrative Floater position. Mr. Groller noted this is going very well, noting this position is currently 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
- Interdepartmental position transfers and backfilling: Recently modified and filled the previously vacant Environmental Waste Coordinator position to manage PA 1 calls, road cuts, and the FOG program with internal staff.

TOWNSHIP VISION STATUS UPDATE *(Continued)*

Slides 15-19: Maintain and Enhance Employee Relations and Communication *(Continued)*

- Finalized the job descriptions and filled positions for the permit tech and zoning assistant; Filled an additional code and zoning position to continue transitioning from a reactive to a proactive service model.
- Finalized creating a publicly accessible codes lobby to serve the residents better.
- Created space and relocated the elected tax collector office to allow for the creation of the codes lobby.
- The Township hired four additional career firefighters and is preparing for one replacement due to retirement at the end of April.
- Hired additional police officers and instituted internal promotions to offset two retirements. Police staff are now at 32 full-time positions.

Mr. Groller said staff will occupy all available offices in the administrative building after hiring an Assistant Engineer.

Technology Updates:

- The New Township website is complete
- The codification of the Ordinances project is ongoing
- Energov product upgraded to EP&L
- The online Payments Project is expected to be implemented in April 2025.
- The Accounts Payable Automation Project is underway and will allow a more efficient way to record, approve, process, and catalog vendor invoices.
- Text MyGov service was purchased and implemented
- ArcGIS software upgrade project is underway
- Staff is currently evaluating BoardEffect Software. This Software will allow for better agenda/packet preparation and disbursement for BOS meetings and appointed and internal committees. The Software also improves efficiency in minute taking, roll calls, etc.
- Motorola WatchGuard upgrade in progress

Mr. Groller confirmed for Mr. Royer that BoardEffect Software does not use AI.

Human Resources

- Streamlined the annual performance review process and modified reviews to mirror the position's job description.
- The employee handbook was updated
- Expanded the Management Development Program to include mid-level management positions and added quarterly group training sessions.

Mr. Becker left the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Employee Relations:

- The Manager and Assistant Manager continue to provide an open-door policy for all staff and promote a positive and healthy culture and work environment.
- The Township is negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement with our firefighter's union (IAFF).
- Preparing for negotiations in 2025 with the non-uniformed association and the police officers (POTTs).
- Held the 2nd annual Township-wide Holiday Luncheon, working on developing an employee recognition program when going above and beyond, allowed for Halloween dress up, and issued Holiday gift cards.

TOWNSHIP VISION STATUS UPDATE (Continued)

Slides 20-23: Continue to Provide Residents with Quality Police and Fire Services

Township of Spring Police Department

Chief Powell reviewed the information on slide 22, a report showing the Police Department's year-to-date activity from 2023 through 2024. Chief Powell stated that traffic incidents were up, calls were up, and specific crimes, such as theft, noting a lot of those were retail theft.

The Police Departments staffing is now at 32, not including the Conditional Offer of Employment that is currently pending. Chief Powell said that the Succession Plan is going well, Deputy Chief Steve Brock is in attendance today and is a good candidate to take over as Chief. He knows the Department well and is respected within it, noting that he grew up in the Township and policing here. Chief Powell stated that the Board made a good choice in choosing Deputy Chief Steve Brock, as the next leader of the Department.

Bus Patrol- Chief Powell said the Wilson School District (WSD) initiated a School Bus Camera Program. The program went online in January 2025. Chief Powell stated that drivers are issued a fine when they pass school buses stopped with their flashers on. Since January, 44 citations have been issued, so there is a problem, noting that he hopes the program will correct driver's behavior and that this is a worthwhile endeavor for the WSD, and that the Department is glad to be part of it. Chief Powell confirmed for Ms. Smith that most of the problem is located near the schools in the north end of town, and that there is additional police presence in these areas.

- Body Cameras: Chief Powell stated that the Department is implementing the new Body Watch Guard Camera System.
- Grants: Chief Powell stated that the Department received \$562,128.00 in LSA grant money in the last eighteen months, which will all be dedicated to improving the Police Building Facilities, noting that the grants should cover all the renovations.
- National Night Out: Scheduled for Tuesday, August 5th, 2025.

Chief Powell stated that the officers have done a fantastic job responding to complaints and being proactive, looking at issues and solving them.

Deputy Chief Brock thanked the Board for the opportunity, noting that losing Chief Powell as he transitions into retirement will be a significant loss for the Township. In the three (3) promotions in the Department last year, Sergeant Joe Hillard went to traffic, Officer Chris Laird took over the FTO Program, and Bob Long was promoted to Lieutenant, and all three of them are doing a fabulous job. Deputy Chief Brock reviewed the promotions coming to the Board after Chief Powell's retirement. There were some difficulties in recruiting a few years ago, noting that the number of applicants was down nationally. The current hiring list is good for the Department, and they are starting to get some good candidates.

Chief Powell thanked the Board for their support of the police department and thanked all the Directors and Managers, noting that everyone works well together as a team.

The Board thanked Chief Powell for what he has done for the police department.

TOWNSHIP VISION STATUS UPDATE (Continued)

Slides 20-23: Continue to Provide Residents with Quality Police and Fire Services (Continued)

Township of Spring Fire Department

Chief Hackman gave the following report: Fire Rescue Services continues to follow the Township BOS vision to provide high-quality yet safe Fire Rescue Services to the residents and guests of the Township of Spring. High-quality services rely on adequate staffing, training, apparatus, equipment, and Public Relations / Community Outreach. We continually evaluate our operations and efficiency based on response times, personnel per incident following NFPA 1710 Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, EMS and Special Operations in Combination Departments, saved property, and ISO (Insurance Services Office) rating. Currently, TSFRS has an ISO Rating of 3Y.

We continue to provide Public Relations / Community Outreach through the children's book reading at the libraries each month, providing a fire prevention program for the entire second grade of the Wilson School District on the education of the use of 911 and evacuating from a house filled with smoke, attending community events like National Night Out, Township Playground programs and touch-a-truck, maintaining our smoke and carbon monoxide detector program, attending fire drills at the schools and numerous other requests.

Staffing

Fire Rescue's current staffing of Firefighters / EMTs is at 16. One employee is scheduled to retire on April 30th, 2025. The last candidate on our eligibility list has withdrawn due to personal reasons. We will begin the hiring process around the fall CPAT, which starts on August 5th, 2025.

Current 2025 Responses

2025 to date responses: 639 – 60 above 2024

2025 Personnel per Incident: 4.8

2025 Dispatched to Enroute: 1.32

2025 Dispatched to On Scene: 7.31

Fire Marshal's Office

The Fire Marshal's Office continues to complete plans, reviews, and inspections. With a focus on only one municipality, the inspections have expanded to include private fire hydrants and cisterns. For the first time in years, all private fire hydrants are now up to the current fire code with inspections and service to ensure their operations. Continuing to work on a Succession Plan for this office with Fire Marshall Hatt working with Inspector Imes.

Grants

We continue to apply for grants through the OSFC (PEMA), FEMA, PA American Water, and UGI. We currently have an open grant with PEMA of \$16,954.99 (Structural Turnout Gear), FEMA of \$122,250.00 (12 SCBA), and a remaining balance of approximately \$8,000.00. Since 2010, TSFRS has received \$509,832.77 in grant funding. Two regional grants were submitted to FEMA for FY2024 for Hose and appliances (\$19,923.00) and AEDs (\$36,636.00).

Records Management System (RMS):

Implementation of our new records management system started on January 1st, 2025. The RMS is 90% live. We are still implementing the training portion of the RMS because Deputy Chief Fritz has restructured our entire training program to ensure all personnel meet the standard requirements to comply with NFPA and ISO (Insurance Services Office). We will continue expanding the information in our monthly reports to the BOS.

TOWNSHIP VISION STATUS UPDATE (Continued)

Slides 20-23: Continue to Provide Residents with Quality Police and Fire Services (Continued)

Township of Spring Fire Department (Continued)

The Command Staff continues to work with HR to develop and implement long-term plans for Station renovations on our existing building, which is 22 years old, the potential for a north Station due to the expected increase in demand for service from the new development apparatus replacement following *NFPA 1901 Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus*, and *NFPA 1910 Standard for the Inspection, Maintenance, Refurbishment, Testing, and Retirement of in-service Emergency Vehicles and Marine Vessels*, and staffing.

You may have confidence in knowing the Officers and staff of the Township of Spring Fire Rescue Services are committed to making this a community that is safe for all its residents, businesses, and guests. Chief Hackman thanked the Supervisors for their continued support and commitment, which allowed the Department to provide the best Fire Rescue services possible. Chief Powell also thanked all the Directors, noting that everyone works well together and chips in to do what needs to be done.

Ms. Smith asked if the Township could create a testing center for physical testing or hire a contractor. Chief Hackman stated that the candidate's physical agility testing is a National Standard and, therefore, not likely to be scrutinized. Chief Hackman said there is a Consortium that consists pretty much of the entire state of Pennsylvania, and all the equipment is stored in a centrally located area at the Lancaster County Training Center. Chief Hackman reviewed the process and storage needs for all the equipment necessary and discussed possibilities with the Board.

Slide 24: Maintain Quality Roads

- Staff continue to monitor the improper road cut restorations performed by most of the Utilities working in the Township. With the creation of Brad Shade's new position, more time is being spent in this area, and we are working with the Utilities regarding their deficiencies.
- The HRG renewal study budgeted to be completed in 2024 was tabled, and staff are working together internally to develop a better replacement and maintenance program for Township roadways. As part of this program, staff will be ensuring that we are "spreading the wealth" throughout the Township to allow more residents to see the utilization of their tax dollars.
- The 2025 Roadwork budget has been set at \$1,200,000.00, and the annual project is expected to be out for bid shortly. The Township is evaluating a cold-in-place process versus a hot mix for a portion of the 2025 project, potentially adding longevity and cost savings.
- The Township has spent over \$6.1 million on road improvements since 2021.

Slide 25: Harvard Boulevard Road Restoration

- The Township was unsuccessful in obtaining the LSA grant that was applied for the road restoration portion of the project.
- The Township received a Multimodal grant for basic walkability in the amount of \$250,000.00. Proceeds will be used for up-to-date curbing and handicap accessibility. Authorization was obtained from the Board in March to begin the engineering design portion of this stage. Current estimates have the cost for this portion of the project estimated at \$675,000. Once the final design is complete, staff will review it with the Board for authorization to develop a game plan to proceed with this unbudgeted item.
- In-house staff will perform patchwork in 2025 to prepare for road restoration in 2026.
- The plan is to re-apply for the LSA grant in 2025 for road restoration in conjunction with bike lanes to benefit transportation in conjunction with the new elementary school.

TOWNSHIP VISION STATUS UPDATE *(Continued)*

Slide 25: Harvard Boulevard Road Restoration *(Continued)*

Mr. Groller confirmed for Mr. Kocher that the grant is for the curbing and handicapped ramps and does not include sidewalks. Mr. Kocher suggested a uniform policy regarding sidewalk replacement that works for all residents. The Board discussed sidewalk replacement and areas without sidewalks.

Slides 26 & 27: Howard Street Sidewalks: Nothing new to report since the last Vision status update meeting. (See Penn Avenue Revitalization Study and Penn Avenue Sidewalks slides)

Slides 28-30: Penn Avenue Sidewalks from Dwight Street to Howard Street

- Staff continue to analyze sidewalks for a multi-block area in this location versus just one block.
- Drafts of the temporary construction sidewalk easements were prepared some time ago for the Dwight to Howard Street portion. Staff have been awaiting a final plan for the entire area (1st block of Howard, Dwight to Howard, and Howard to Norman) versus piecemealing the project.
- The Township is renewing the PennDOT HOP permit that expires on August 12th, 2025.
- The Township will apply for a Multimodal walkability grant in 2025 to offset this project's cost, pushing the actual work into Summer/Fall 2026 for any movement on the upgrades.

Slide 31: Explore Merging Services with Neighboring Municipalities

- Staff will continue to evaluate and discuss opportunities with the Supervisors as they arise.
- Recently received authorization to enter into an equipment and workforce sharing agreement with the Borough of Wyomissing.

Slide 32: MS4 NPDES Permit Renewal: No update since the last vision meeting. Annual permit renewal will be prepared in the 3rd quarter of 2025.

Slides 33-35: MS4 Pollutant Reduction Facilities (Permit Requirements): Construction is complete on the Werner Estates and Yerger Boulevard Improvements. Township staff is working on signage to be placed at each location to educate the community on the purpose of the improvements based on public feedback. Consideration for MS4 projects at the Stanford Avenue dam and the channel upstream of the Werner Farms development is ongoing. Coordination is continuing with the Wyomissing Creek Watershed Coalition.

Slide 36: Recycling Containers in Parks: No update since the May 2024 Vision Meeting.

Slide 37: Renewable Energy/Moving Towards a Greener Outlook: No updates since the last Vision Meeting; however, the Public Works Department began using beet juice rather than calcium chlorides as part of its winter maintenance program.

Slide 38: Impact of Additional Career Firefighters on Tax Rate: The Board of Supervisors included a .25 mill tax increase in 2024 and a .40 mill increase in the 2025 budget. The Township hired four additional career staff in February of 2025. The recommendation is to remove it as a vision item moving forward.

Slides 39-41: New for 2025- Reading Hospital Tract: Approvals listed.

Slide 42: Supervisors Update: PA American Water Company usage of Schener Lake and/or lake property.

Supervisors:

Mr. Stuck stated that the Planning Commission had a good meeting regarding the Reading Hospital Tract. Mr. Reichert confirmed the process is going well and reviewed some of the processes the Township is going through with the applicant.

Ms. Smith noted her items to add as Vision Items:

- 1) Pickleball Courts
- 2) Electric Scooter Education- (mentioned at a previous Board Meeting)
- 3) Werner Farmhouse-Ms. Smith questioned what the status of the Werner Farmhouse is. Ms. Houck confirmed that the Township maintains it in its current condition, but there are no plans at this time to do something with it. Ms. Houck stated that the Department would like to restore and use it as programming space. Mr. Stuck asked about possibly receiving grant money to restore it for environmental programming. The Board discussed possible options and questioned if the site is considered historical.
- 4) County Involvement with other local communities with Fire and Ambulance
- 5) Passive Recreation at the Quarry-Discussed
- 6) 250th Country Anniversary-Discussed

Mr. Groller gave an update on the Dwight Street Bridge Project, noting that consultants will develop a Conceptual Plan and alternatives as soon as the base mapping is complete.

Mr. Royer noted that his vision is for the Board to make it easier for residents to have chickens. Mr. Wozniak confirmed that you need 1 acre to have chicken on your property in the Township. There was discussion on the topic.

Mr. Kocher questioned if the Township has a responsible AI Policy, noting that this should be done in the short term rather than as a Vision item.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, Chairperson Smith adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mary L Rossi
Township Secretary