Bethel Township
Board of Supervisors
Special Meeting
May 25, 2021

The Bethel Township Board of Supervisors Special Meeting for discussion on loan financing for the library and other items that come before the Board was called to order by Chairman Jacob Meyer at 6:00 p.m. in the Bethel Township Meeting Room, Bethel PA.

Attending the hearing were Robbi Lane, Michael Graby and Jacob Meyer. Also, in attendance were Solicitor Graziella M. Sarno and Township Sec. Treas. Jayne Seifrit.

Jake Meyer stated there is a sign in sheet. Jake Meyer read the first name on the list from the sign in sheet.

Herbert Zechman gave a brief history of the library which included the first location, and Northwestern Berks Jaycees funding the library and assistance in moving the library to the various locations over time until it landed in its current location. Herb Zechman stated the history of the library to show the importance of it. Herb Zechman asked if this Board has a vision for the library as the past supporters did. Herb Zechman stated the library could submit quarterly financials if the Township signs to guarantee the USDA loan.

Jayne Seifrit stated the Township received 42 emails in less than a week stating the importance of the library. The Board was sent the emails prior to the meeting; the emails were also printed and placed in a book for the meeting. The library also has a list of names, addresses and signatures of people in favor of the library.

Randall Haag thanked the Board for having this meeting for the possibility of giving the library a new needed building. He also said he was here for the library since the Jaycees days. He pointed out a real estate transfer that was in the paper which equated to $123,000.00 coming to Bethel, he knows that doesn’t pay for a building but love or hate warehouses they are making Bethel Township rich.

John Brown stated the library is needed and gets used. John Brown stated he spent time looking at the plans and doesn’t feel we need a state-of-the-art building; the plans are overdone. He feels there could be a 80 x 60 building done for $250,000.00 and fit out for around $600,000.00. He encourages the Board to do a building but not at $1.8 million.

Judy Apgar is in favor of having a library, it is needed but not a building at that cost 1.8 million dollars. It needs to be functional, and not raise taxes.

Kevin Longenecker – nothing at this time.

Scott Jabinski, Builder with Spotts (current contract holder for 1.8 million dollar) stated the cost would be more like $2.1 million in today’s pricing. They did look at the plan and had removed some items and got the cost to $1.1 million back then. Communities need libraries to help educate and serve its communities. It was asked what expenses they have incurred with the current contract. Scott Jabinski stated the bond is the biggest about $36,000.00 and other items between $22,000.00 and $28,000.00. The library group stated they have already paid two architects to this point.

Rita Geesaman – nothing at this time

Jay Bicksler – nothing at this time

Steve Burkhart stated he went and toured the current library building. He agrees with John Brown, they could have a nice building for $500,000.00, get an engineering firm to do plans not architects. Steve Burkhart stated we do need to fix what we have for safety rather
quickly. Steve Burkhart stated he would volunteer his time to get started. He said we can be our own general contractor and go from there. Steve Burkhart stated for $600,000.00 - $700,000.00 there could be a very nice building. John Brown stated to start from scratch.

Rita Geesaman asked what the Township building cost. Jayne Seifrit stated this building, including the police side and improvements at the garage area and adding a truck bay, was $1.7 plus million. It was also paid in 6 years. Also, more building than the library’s plan.

Teresa Burkhart would be interested in what the numbers are for the library. She also wonders how the library is used. She does her library needs online. Kaitlyn Lehman started telling numbers for circulation, visitors, programs etc.

Ginger stated she has been coming to the library since she was 2 and a half years old. She said the staff are so kind she feels safe and protected. She stated the programs are great. She said to the Board to please vote for the library renovations.

Kaitlyn Lehman and Betsy Kreider, co-directors of the library presented the last several years as it pertains to the renovations. 2012 the Tulpehocken School District stated they had space that could be rented. It was not a good fit at the time. 2016 hired an architect, it would have been $700,000.00 to unify the space and there was a grant for just about half of it coming in 2017. The Township thought for that sum of money they could get more square footage. A new architect was brought in, resulting in the current plan and price. Architect drug on and on, did not get extension for the grant, so it was lost. November 2020 it was stated the library met with the Supervisors and were encouraged to apply for USDA loan for 2 million dollars. Much discussion in light of items presented.

Scott Jabinski stated an engineer should be contacted, for a basic building.

Daphne Meyer asked is the Township going to back the loan.

Robbi Lane stated she is in favor of the library and their need for a building and fixes, just not at the 2-million-dollar cost.

Mike Graby is in favor of the library and assessing the issues that need fixed so that they can have a functional building. Additional discussion on what and who will be paying, as well as timing for what will be done.

Herb Zechman questioned the means to meet the loan by the library.

Paul Stauffer stated the income was $169,331.00 and expenses were $113,000.00. The loan annually on $2,000,000.00 at 2.25% is $70,000.00. The library staff is spending too much time being concerned of how this is being paid. It was asked if there can be a commitment from the Township, they pay for all.

Jake Meyer asked if the loan can be approved if there is no plan; probably not.

Michelle VanLuvanee supports the library as she read in her letter pointing out special events. She shared statistics on the importance of libraries.

Audrey VanLuvanee shared her thoughts on the importance of the library.

Robbi Lane stated there was never an idea of not having a library. She believes there needs to be a game plan. Just cannot support $2,000,000.00.

Mike Graby stated he believes we should fix/repair but not exceeding $100,000.00.

Kaitlyn Lehman pointed out other issues at the library, lights, water, toilets not working etc.

Robbi Lane asked for the dollar amount from Jayne. Jayne Seifrit stated monies allocated for the library with $100,000.00 being for sure earmarked for the library. More discussion on what is being done.

Jerry Bowman asked if the Township is backing the library? Patch it now.

Robbi Lane backing library on a smaller scale, not on 2 million dollars.
Jake Meyer stated it is a community center. It is a township building. There is the constant worry about how to pay for it. Jake Meyer believes the Township should pay for whatever happens to the library. Then the library can use funds to expand programs. Then no financial worries for the building.

Mike Graby would like to see it happen over time and by project and the Township paying for it.

Robbi Lane suggested Steve Burkhart head an exploratory on the library needs, wants etc. Daphne Meyer asked if there can be a time limit. Jayne Seifrit asked about the Capital Campaign that was done years ago. They don’t have a separate account where the funds went. It was asked what funds the Township is putting towards this project. Jayne Seifrit stated there is money that can go towards the library renovations. However, it is too early to share publicly the number as the budget for 2021 is only halfway through. It was stated additional help for the committee will be from John Brown and others as needed.

Jake Meyer made a motion to have the financial responsibility for the library building be the Township’s and do the band aids to make the building useable, seconded by Mike Graby. All agreed. Motion carried. There was additional discussion on time frame etc. There will be information for the June 21, 2021 meeting.

TAC – Mike Graby stated he has two people to serve on TAC, they are Rodney Keeney and Carl Kauffman III. Mike Graby made a motion to appoint Rodney Keeney and Carl Kauffman III to be on the committee condition on checking that they can serve as they are both on other committees, seconded by Robbi Lane. All agreed. Motion carried.

Robbi Lane stated she has someone for the Recreation Board, Cal Maciejewski. Jayne Seifrit stated it is done by Resolution, will have it ready for June meeting.

Robbi Lane made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Jake Meyer. Meeting adjourned at 8:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted

[Signature]

Jayne K Seifrit
Township Secretary