

MINUTES

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

LOWER ALLEN TOWNSHIP

BUDGET WORKSHOP

October 20, 2025

The following were in ATTENDANCE:

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Jennifer Caron, President
Dean W. Villone, Commissioner
Charles Brown, Commissioner
Joseph Swartz, Commissioner

TOWNSHIP PERSONNEL

Rebecca Davis, Township Manager
David Holl, Public Safety Director
Alycia Knoll, Finance Director
Isaac Sweeney, P.E., CED Director
Benjamin Powell, P.E., Public Works Director
Leon Crone, Human Resources Director
Doug Foltz, Police Captain
Tony Deaven, EMS Captain
Tom Rigling, DFRS Captain
Scot Emerson, Facilities Manager
Charlie Reynolds, Fleet Manager
Nate Sterling, Administrative Secretary
Reneé Greenawalt, Recording Secretary

President Caron called the October 20, 2025 Budget Workshop of the Board of Commissioners (BOC) to order at 6:00 PM. She announced Proof of Publication for the meeting was available for review and noted that Vice President Nagy was absent with excuse. This was followed by a moment of silence and the pledge of allegiance.

Proposed 2026 Budget

Presentation and Discussion

Manager Davis introduced the item for discussion. She explained the Budget was being presented differently from past years, noting the consolidation of several cost centers and changes in how revenues and expenditures are organized. A capital expenditures summary by department was provided, along with spreadsheets which showed items already cut from the Budget (grayed out), and those with proposed positions not currently included in expenses. Staff were requesting decisions on several items including the addition of a police officer, the purchase or lease of a fourth ambulance, and consideration of options to make up the General Fund deficit projected to be a little over \$2 million.

Director Knoll presented high level details and reviewed key adjustments made to the draft Budget. She addressed an increase in the reimbursement amounts from management agreements, resulting in a projected General Fund balance of \$19,223,155. The budget for the Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) project along Rossmoyne Road was adjusted to reflect a \$90,000 expenditure, down from \$447,000, contingent on the approval of a grant in partnership with the West Shore School District. Manager Davis noted that the project would not go forward without the grant.

Director Knoll noted the potential need to make cuts to capital items to balance the budget. The Township currently has \$11 million in cash, with a fund balance policy requiring 30% of General Fund expenditures to be retained. The BOC discussed the possible need to use fund balance to cover the \$2 million deficit but expressed concern about reducing the fund balance too much. There was also discussion about past surplus funds and whether it was prudent to use the fund balance for balancing the budget this year.

The BOC considered different options for covering the deficit, including the use of the fund balance and prioritizing capital projects. Director Knoll noted that there may be a need for future incremental tax increases to keep up with inflation and growing expenditures.

Director Knoll reviewed the capital project requests, organized by department, and presented details about grant-funded projects. Directors were available to answer any questions regarding specific equipment or project funding.

Facilities Manager, Mr. Scott Emerson emphasized the urgency of roof repairs at Township buildings, citing significant leaks and past patching attempts. The BOC agreed that these repairs are essential and should not be deferred.

Director Sweeney provided an update on ongoing digitization efforts. Although not immediately critical, the BOC recognized the importance of digitizing Township records for easier access, efficient fulfillment of Right-to-Know Law Requests and historical preservation, and recommended funding the project at a reduced amount of \$10,000.

Director Holl noted the \$93,000 already cut from the Police Department budget and addressed the request to fund two (2) new squad cars, body-worn cameras and License Plate Reader (LPR) cameras, all of which are essential to maintain the Department's operations.

EMS Captain Deaven presented the request for purchase or leasing of a fourth ambulance to ensure continuous service. Given the aging fleet and maintenance challenges, the BOC discussed the pros and cons of leasing versus purchasing the vehicle. Director Knoll explained that the leasing would cost about \$80,000 to \$90,000 annually, would fall within the debt service category and would allow for even payments, an advantage for budgeting purposes.

Director Powell discussed several road projects that were committed due to previous bids and grant funding. The BOC emphasized the importance of continuing these projects while exploring ways to reduce general fund expenditures by utilizing liquid fuels for some of the paving costs. The BOC also reviewed the need for a dump truck replacement for winter maintenance.

The BOC further discussed potential leasing options for ambulances and vehicles to reduce immediate cash outlays. BOC members and staff agree that implementation of a plan to phase vehicle purchases and lease replacements over time would smooth out future financial pressures.

Next, the BOC considered the requested positions not in the Budget. Manager Davis described the request for a part-time or full-time staff communications position to assist in updating the website and social media, preparing the newsletter, and to serve as a backup recording secretary. Also requested was an Information Technology (IT) Specialist for half a year.

Director Holl and Police Captain Foltz presented the request for additional positions within the Police Department. The Department is currently operating with 26 officers, down from 27 at the beginning of the year, and is facing challenges in meeting staffing requirements. They are requesting the addition of one more officer to bring the total number of sworn officers to 28, though the goal is to eventually reach 29 officers. This would help address staffing shortages and reduce reliance on forced overtime. The staffing plan is based on previous recommendations and staffing studies, which indicated the need for more officers to cover shifts, particularly given upcoming retirements and injuries. Director Holl indicated that the hiring process has been difficult due to

the need for testing through the Cumberland County Police Consortium, which makes recruitment more competitive. Despite this, two (2) promising candidates have emerged, including one with prior service experience. He also expressed concerns about the financial strain of continuing to rely on overtime to fill shifts and the impact on officer well-being. The goal is to hire ahead of time to avoid staffing gaps, but due to slow hiring processes, the Department has struggled to keep up with demand.

Director Holl and Department of Fire Rescue Services (DFRS) Chief Rigling also addressed the staffing challenges associated with the Fire Departments. The increased training hours required for new recruits coupled with a national shortage of volunteer firefighters has led to difficulties in maintaining staffing levels. DFRS is requesting an additional Public Safety Officer (PSO) position to help manage emergency services and cover staffing gaps caused by the decline in part-time volunteers.

EMS Captain Deaven presented the challenges of managing EMS staff levels due to reduced part-time staff availability. The EMS Department is requesting a full-time AEMT Hybrid position to fill the gaps and ensure consistent coverage for emergency responses. Due to the specialized nature of EMS work, staffing is difficult to manage without full-time employees, and the department faces increased overtime costs as a result.

The BOC discussed concerns about growing service demands due to growing development in neighboring areas. These developments could lead to increased service calls, putting additional strain on the Township's Public Safety Department resources. The potential for these developments to increase the demand for law enforcement and emergency services in the Township was noted as a concern for future planning.

Mr. Charlie Reynolds, Fleet Manager, presented the request for a part-time Fleet Mechanic, ideally a vo-tech student, to work 25 hours a week on routine maintenance, which would create more time for full-time staff to address more technical repairs. It was noted that budget consideration should be given to the possibility of bringing that individual to full-time status in 2027.

Director Knoll highlighted potential revenue sources not previously captured to help balance the General Fund budget. One of the key items for BOC consideration was using \$500,000 from the 2025 Amended Budget funds. She also suggested potential adjustments to salaries, debt, and taxes. The debt millage rate of 0.41 could be partially reallocated. Reducing this to 0.2 millage would free up approximately \$350,000 which could be transferred into the General Fund. However, this would only be possible if the Township maintains debt obligations, including capital leases. She also presented several options for tax increases. Different millage increases were modeled for potential revenue increases.

BOC members expressed concerns about budget growth. They discussed the 10% increase in the Budget this year, noting the significant rise from last year's budget. It was noted that key factors contributing to the increase include healthcare costs which have risen by \$800,000 (a 20% increase) and capital expenses particularly in vehicles. There was concern about the long-term sustainability of such budget increases particularly given the rising costs of healthcare and vehicles. Healthcare costs have jumped significantly, which represents a major unplanned expenditure. Salaries and healthcare together account for almost 60% of the General Fund budget, which is a significant concern for long-term financial stability. The Township may need to reconsider how to balance expenditures and revenues in future years.

It was clarified that the General Fund currently has a deficit of approximately \$2 million, while other funds are more self-sustaining. The General Fund deficit increased from previous years because of reallocating certain expenditures (e.g., traffic light maintenance) into the General Fund for clearer financial reporting.

Several BOC members voiced concerns about raising taxes. Some BOC members prefer small, incremental tax increases annually rather than a larger, one-time tax increase. This strategy would help manage the rising costs gradually and allow for better forecasting.

President Caron asked Director Knoll to prepare hybrid options for how to fill the deficit for the BOC's consideration.

Action Items

President Caron called for action on two items, (1) the hiring of a police officer, and (2) the acquisition of a fourth ambulance.

Commissioner **BROWN** motioned to incorporate a new full-time police officer position into the 2026 Budget. Commissioner **SWARTZ** seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

Commissioner **SWARTZ** made a motion to authorize the leasing of an ambulance as part of the 2026 Budget. Commissioner **VILLONE** seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

Manager Davis expressed appreciation to staff for their efforts in preparing the proposed 2026 Budget. She also confirmed that options would be prepared for the BOC to consider at their next meeting.

BOC members also expressed gratitude to the staff acknowledging the inevitable reality of budget challenges.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: Any item on the agenda.

President Caron invited members of the audience to identify themselves should they wish to comment on any item on the agenda or any business pertinent to the Township. She noted that discussion would be limited to five minutes per person. There was none.

EXECUTIVE SESSION and ADJOURNMENT

President Caron announced that the BOC would adjourn to executive session for discussion of 2026 salaries and benefits.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM.