

DEPARTMENTS

Police Department

A.) 2026 Dog Control Services – discussion

Chief Winchester reported that the entity providing services will not be in business next year. The current contract is up at the end of 2025. The Police Department had a meeting with Animal Rescue League (ARL) personnel to explore possible options for 2026 and attempt to re-establish a relationship with a business located in Cumru Township. The Police Department only needs assistance with temporary housing for dogs that can't be rehomed with the owners. By using improved equipment and social media, the Police Department only needs assistance with approximately 8-10 dogs per year. Since the numbers are so low, the Police Department is looking for an economical solution. This is a mandated service that must be provided by the Township.

The previous agreement with ARL allowed any animal to be brought in by residents. The last rate the ARL promulgated was \$7.00-\$7.50/resident, which is over \$100,000 for 8-10 dogs per year. Ideally a fee per service would be preferred because the agreement would only cover dogs delivered to the ARL by the police. However, the ARL does not want to offer fee for service.

Chief Winchester requested that the Board get involved by contacting the ARL Board to negotiate a per service contract. He state that the Police Department would be willing to participate in public education with the ARL. The ARL has a Cadillac version of their contract with another municipality for \$4/capita, he was hoping for more of a Chevy version for Cumru Twp at \$2.50/capita, similar to the library contribution.

Ms. Johnston stated there are 15,619 residents per the 2020 census, multiplied by \$7.00 would cost \$109,333.00 for 8-10 dogs. At the \$4.00 rate, the service would cost \$62,476.00. The annual library contribution is only \$39,500.00.

When Mr. Greg Miller asked about other providers, Chief Winchester said that there was only Safety Net in this area. The Township had used this provider in the past and was not happy with the service.

Mr. Donnell stated that it would be upside down to pay 2 times the library money for 8-10 dogs. Mr. Greg Miller and Mr. Donnell agreed to talk to the ARL.

Fire Department

A.) Fire Station Construction – consider change order no. 2 for handicapped ramps and paving

Jeff Skinner from Atlas, the Township's representative in the field for the new fire station construction, explained the change order for pavement and ADA access to the Administration building. Change order #2 is for \$121,327.14 and a time extension for the completion date by the General Contractor to allow for any potential issues with paving during the winter. Temperatures need to be 40 degrees or higher for paving work. Due to the change in the scope of the work, a possible time extension is necessary because weather will dictate when the top wearing course can be completed.

Ms. Johnston said that work has started on the upper level handicapped ramp. The lower level handicapped ramp work is expected for next week. The change order amount was covered by the bond money.

ON MOTION OF MR. GREG MILLER, SECOND OF MR. DONNELL, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO APPROVE CHANGE ORDER #2 AS SUBMITTED.

Administration

A.) Arbitrage Payment – consider professional service fees

Ms. Johnston explained that due to delays by other agencies the bulk of the bond money was not used within the 36 months so arbitrage came into play. The bonds were issued at an interest rate of 1.99%.

An IRS form must be included with the arbitrage payment that is due by December 29, 2025. Ms. Johnston requested that the Board approve using a professional banking service to assist Administration with the payment submission.

Atty. Frankowski stated that the fees were reasonable. Ms. Johnston added that the Board could set an amount to not exceed.

Atty. Frankowski stated since this is a necessary contracted service it doesn't need a motion, just an agreement by the Board.

The Board agreed to pursue the contract for professional services not to exceed \$3000.

B.) Rights of Way Maintenance – discussion

Ms. Johnston stated that the Township has received numerous complaints about the Township not mowing. She once again explained that the Township is not responsible for mowing private property.

She wanted the Board to think about whether the Township should treat “country” roads the same as “urbanized” roads. Cumru Township has extremes with pockets of suburban and urban development and also many rural areas. Should the maintenance by property owners be expected to be the same?

Ms. Johnston added that she was referring to right-of-way growth that did not pose a hazard.

Public Works

A.) Roadside, Non-Traffic Signs – discussion

Ms. Johnston explained that the Township receives requests for special signs that are not traffic related. There is a PennDOT rule book that dictates sign placement for traffic signs. She is referring to signs such as “Children at Play”, “Watch Children” and “Hidden Driveway”.

Most signs are not very expensive but the cost adds up. Ms. Johnston cautioned against having too many signs on the roads to avoid “sign fatigue”.

Some residents create their own issues such as placing a driveway in an area not recommended and then requesting a “Hidden Driveway” sign.

Mr. McNichols stated that the sign requests require time for communication and implementation in addition to the cost of the signs.

Ms. Johnston said that many of the hazards are subjective. She asked how the Board wanted to handle these requests. There is no easy answer to the question: where does it end?

Mr. Donnell asked if signs were in the budget. Mr. McNichols said there is money allocated in the budget for traffic sign replacement but not for special signs.

Mr. Greg Miller asked if residents could put up their own signs. Mr. McNichols stated that the signs can't be in the right-of-way.

Atty. Frankowski said that residents can put signs in their own yards but as an example, how effective is a “Hidden Driveway” sign if it is far away from the road.

Solicitor

A.) 20 S. Summit – Sencit Apartments – update

Atty. Frankowski gave an update that she received a timeline to fix the broken elevator by October 2026. She talked to Brian Gottshall from Berks County DES for recommendation ideas. She then talked to the solicitor for Sencit to discuss implementing ideas from Berks County DES. The solicitor agreed to talk to the property owners. Two of the ideas were (1) pay additional fees to expedite the process and (2) have a 24/7 onsite person to handle issues like resetting the working elevator immediately.

Atty. Frankowski was also trying to get solutions for housing the handicapped residents.

There was discussion about the ongoing problem. They discussed issuing citations by the Codes Department. The custom manufacturing of the elevator is beyond anyone’s control. There was skepticism about the timeline and the legitimate efforts being made by the owners.

Chief Beane stated that a total replacement is needed, not just parts. The problem is that they have been applying band aids and quick fixes for a long time. He stated that, when the residents hold the elevator open, which they often do because of their assistive devices, the breaker is tripped and requires a reset. If this happens outside of regular business hours, there is no one in-house to reset the elevators and the fire department must respond. Chief Beane agreed that the best solution until the elevators are replaced would be to have a 24/7 person onsite to handle issues.

Atty. Frankowski offered to talk to the Codes Inspector about a realistic timeline and to talk to the solicitor for Sencit again. She agreed that having a 24/7 attendant would be an immediate solution.

Mr. Greg Miller suggested having a meeting.

Atty. Frankowski left the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE

A.) Meeting advertised on 10/28/25 and 10/31/25

2026 BUDGET

SIGNIFICANT DATES	DATE
Deadline to adopt budget	12/31/2025
Deadline to report millage to Berks County for issuing R.E. tax bills	12/26/2025
Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting	12/16/2025
Deadline to change Act 511 taxes (would require ordinance)	12/01/2025
Deadline for budget advertisement to appear	11/27/2025
Deadline to email advertisement for budget	11/25/2025

Ms. Johnston explained all the deadlines involved in the budget process as stated above in order for the Board to be able to adopt the 2026 budget at the Board of Commissioners meeting scheduled for December 16, 2025. Not meeting the advertising deadline could result in needing to have a special meeting to adopt the budget before the end of the year. The budget advertisement needs to appear in print at least 20 days before being adopted by the Board.

A.) Refuse Fund

Ms. Johnston presented the refuse fund budget using the current rates of \$290/year for 1 adult households and \$320/year for 2 adult households. She reminded the Board that the auditor had suggested having a carryover of 30% of estimated expenses at the end of the year.

There was discussion about several line items. Healthcare costs have increased 19.6%. The switches for the phone system are incompatible with newer technology. The cost will be spread across the funds. The cost for the refuse/recycling calendar has increased due to adding an extra panel to include required communications to residents.

Next year is the last year of the current hauling contract. A new contract will have to be bid in 2026 to start in 2027. Historical trends point toward an increase in rates for the new contract.

Several options were discussed pertaining to the structure of the refuse fund. These included whether the current rate should remain or should the rate be increased back to the previous rate, and should the tiered system be eliminated.

Mr. Donnell stated that he was in favor of retaining the tiered rate because he felt that it was more fair for residents' household use. Commissioner-elect Mark Ferrero echoed Mr. Donnell.

Ms. Johnston explained that a resolution would appear on the December agenda. She recommended using a consent agenda for the December meeting.

Mr. Donnell asked about regulations for trash collection. Ms. Johnston explained that there are regulations for mandated recycling communities such as Cumru Township. An example would be that leaf waste collection requires a yard waste site and curbside pickup twice a year. Not providing trash service results in codes violations resulting from hoarding and dumping.

There was discussion about bid specifications and creating refuse districts. There are 2 contracts involved; 1 for hauling and 1 for tipping fees. Ms. Johnston reported that the tonnage of trash seemed to have leveled out back to pre-Covid amounts.

There was additional discussion about the possibility of the Township doing its own trash collection. This would require bonafide trash trucks, more employees and workers compensation would increase. Trash trucks cost at least \$500,000 each. A special parking area would be needed for the trucks. Cleaning and maintenance would also be costly to comply with PaDEP regulations.

The Board did not change the refuse fee for 2026.

B.) Stormwater Fund

Ms. Johnston explained that the MS4 program requires the Township to inspect new stormwater facilities during construction and for 10 years after installation. Even individual homes are required to do stormwater management. The current residential stormwater fees are \$1000 for review and installation inspections and \$1000 for future inspections. The expectation is to collect approximately \$10,000 next year.

Mr. McNichols reported about a recent emergency storm sewer repair that was completed using a CoStars contractor. Approximately 200 ft. of disintegrated stormwater piping was lined for \$50,000. This repair was completed in 1 day without ripping up the streets and will last for many years.

The Township is allowed to spend unallocated stormwater funds on storm sewers. The budget proposes to use \$10,000 from the stormwater fund to help pay for the storm sewer repair.

C.) SMP Fund

Ms. Johnston explained that the SMP fund is for on-lot septic systems only. Cumru Township currently has a little over 1000 on-lot septic systems. The DEP mandated setting up a program to regularly inspect on-lot septic systems. The current SMP program requires an on-lot system to be pumped out and inspected once every 3 years during the pumping cycle. Cumru Township has 3 pumping cycles. The Sewage Enforcement Officer (SEO) inspects the system when it is pumped out. The SEO also handles enforcement and permits for new systems and repairs to existing systems.

The SMP fund started in 2017 at a cost of \$75/year. Part of this fee was supposed to help pay when the DEP requested an Act 537 plan. The Township had submitted a plan that was later withdrawn at the request of the DEP.

Ms. Johnston recommended not draining this fund because the DEP could make another request for an Act 537 plan at any time. This is an expensive undertaking comprised of various special studies.

There was an explanation of wages and benefit expenditures in this fund.

Mrs. Wylezik-Pfeiffer works with the SEO. She explained that the SMP program helps to extend the life of the on-lot septic systems. Using the same SEO provides a standard for all the inspections.

Mr. Donnell asked about the requirements for an Act 537 plan. Ms. Johnston explained that the DEP can request special studies to be conducted depending on areas of concern such as failing on-lot systems in a particular location.

The current SMP fee is \$55/year. Mrs. Wylezik-Pfeiffer recommended not lowering this fee because the current average cost of an inspection is approximately \$210. This cost varies because it is a little less expensive if multiple inspections are conducted on the same day and travel costs can be shared. Approximately 200 inspections are conducted each year.

The Board did not change the SMP fee for 2026.

D.) Ambulance Fund

Ms. Johnston reported that the current milage is 0.34 mils on the tax bill. The ambulance contract is \$45/household. Using these amounts, the ambulance fund would need to borrow money from the General fund to pay for the 2026 February and March payments until the tax money comes in. The ambulance fund would be under water at the end of 2026 without any carryover into 2027.

Ms. Johnston explained that a mil is based on the taxable assessed property values so this does not include tax exempt properties such as utilities and churches. From January 2025 to October 2025, there was a reduction of \$3.3 million in assessed value for Cumru Township. \$983,200 was for taxable properties becoming tax exempt. Commercial reassessment, including a decrease of \$1.2 million for Green Hills Corporate Center which houses Penske, accounted for the remainder.

Ms. Johnston offered to send alternate versions of the ambulance fund based on different millages to the Board for comparison. Mr. Greg Miller requested that the CPI for 911 dispatching be changed from 3.0 to 3.3% to be more accurate.

A new contract with TowerDIRECT will need to be negotiated in 2026. The current contract is based on cost/household. Is this still a valid cost basis or should other bases of cost be investigated?

Mr. Greg Miller stated that the ambulance expenses are fixed so the only way to fix the numbers is to increase the millage. He requested comparisons up to .4 mil.

E) Debt Service Fund

Ms. Johnston explained there is a very slim carryover and that the money is borrowed from the General fund until the tax money comes in. Only the debt service and professional fees associated with maintaining debt service are paid out of this fund.

COMMISSIONERS

A.) Planning Commission – accept resignation of Gerald Potochnik
ON MOTION OF MR. DONNELL, SECOND OF MR. GREG MILLER, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF GERALD POTOCHNIK FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION WITH REGRETS.

REMINDERS

A.) Board of Commissioners meetings for November 2025

- 1) 11/13/2025 at 6:30 p.m. – Budget meeting
- 2) 11/18/2025 at 7:00 p.m. – Regular meeting
- 3) 11/20/2025 at 6:30 p.m. – Budget meeting

B.) Planning Commission 12/01/2025 at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

ON MOTION OF MR. GREG MILLER, SECOND OF MR. DONNELL, A UNANIMOUS VOTE TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:08 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeanne E. Johnston
Manager/Secretary