

News

## Lower Pottsgrove wants to be 'business friendly'

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LOWER POTTS GROVE — The township is already quite “business friendly,” according to the township engineer.

As previously requested, Scott Exley outlined a few areas where Lower Pottsgrove can improve communications with developers, state agencies and other third parties during Monday’s Board of Commissioners meeting. For starters, the township should review developers’ ideas before any sketch plans or approvals are made. This can help identify problems early on, he said.

Dirt should not be turned — or projects should not begin — until final development plans have been approved and escrow funds have been posted, Exley said.

“This saves on problems of chasing them down when things go awry,” the president of Bursich Associates Inc. said.

Once approvals are in place, all the agencies and people involved should meet again to go over expectations. Assistant Township Manager Alyson Elliott said these recommendations are actually more business friendly because people know what to expect from the beginning.

One example is The 422 Sports Plex on Industrial Highway. The township received a letter from owner John Burns praising the efforts of Lower Pottsgrove staff members.

“This is the way it’s supposed to be,” Exley said.

At the direction of Commissioner Stephen Klotz, staff members were challenged to function more like a business. Township Manager Rodney Hawthorne read from a cost-savings memo, outlining a minimum of \$353,268.96 in savings during 2008.

More than \$30,000 was conserved by having the public works department perform routine auto maintenance, such as oil changes, on the township’s fleet, he said. Supervised prison labor saves another \$4,492 per year.

Elsewhere, Hawthorne said, “I would like to point out that in-house grant writing and contract specifications have saved tens of thousands of dollars that will go on indefinitely, as ground that has been purchased for open space does not add children to our schools and requires no road maintenance ... This one item alone will save \$235,000 at the minimum for 2008.”

Klotz thanked staff. “As I read this letter, I’m going to challenge you again,” he said.

Other commissioners said these savings were vital to avoiding a property tax increase in a tough economy.

In other matters:

A sex offender ordinance has been postponed, pending the completion of a map outlining 1,000-foot distances from certain public areas. Bursich Associates will complete the map for a price not to exceed \$8,000.

The commissioners are interested in a local law that they believe will go above and beyond the scope of Megan's Law. Those convicted of sex crimes against children would be forbidden from coming within 1,000 feet of a school, recreation area, etc. Township solicitor R. Kurtz Holloway said the ordinance takes parts of the "best and most enforceable, clearest ordinances that were written."

The board recognized retiring police officer Kathy Foltz with words of thanks, several rounds of applause and a plaque. State Rep. Tom Quigley, R-146th Dist., also presented the 13-year veteran and first female officer of the Lower Pottsgrove police force with a citation from the House of Representatives.

Commissioners' Chairman Bruce Foltz thanked her for the "fine job she did."

"And I wish her luck in her new adventures," he said.

Foltz will be pursuing a new career in nursing. Richard Smith was named as her replacement by a unanimous vote, pending his passing of several tests.

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