

Benezette Township Meeting
Meeting Minutes – November 8, 2023

The Benezette Township Board of Supervisors held their regular monthly meeting on Wednesday November 8, 2023 at the Benezette School House located at 105 Schoolhouse Road, Benezette, PA. A workshop began at 5:30 PM with the township meeting starting at 6:00 PM. Present were Chairman/Supervisor Doug Ruffo, Supervisor Pam Mong, Supervisor Brandi Hanes, and Secretary/Treasurer Krista Meyer. Please see the attached sign in sheet for residents and guests present at the meeting. Supervisor Ruffo called the township meeting to order with the pledge of allegiance and thanked everyone for attending.

FLOW OF THE MEETING: SUPERVISOR RUFFO REMINDED ALL GUESTS ABOUT THE FLOW OF THE MEETING. THE SUPERVISORS WILL SOLICIT QUESTIONS WHEN NEEDED, BUT IF A GUEST HAS ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE HOLD THEM OFF UNTIL THE PUBLIC FORUM PORTION OF THE MEETING.

MOTION TO ACCEPT OCTOBER 2023 TOWNSHIP MEETING MINUTES:

FIRST: Supervisor Mong COMMENTS: None SECOND: Supervisor Hanes YES: 3 NO: 0

MOTION TO ACCEPT OCTOBER 2023 TOWNSHIP TREASURER'S REPORT:

FIRST: Supervisor Mong COMMENTS: None SECOND: Supervisor Hanes YES: 3 NO: 0

ACCEPT JAY TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENTS 5 YEAR CONTRACT WITH BENEZETTE TOWNSHIP AT A RATE OF \$14,647.06:

FIRST: Supervisor Mong COMMENTS: None SECOND: Supervisor Hanes YES: 3 NO: 0

2024 BUDGET PROPOSAL: Supervisor Ruffo stated that the proposed budget for 2024 was completed and would be set for advertisement tomorrow (November 8, 2023). The State Fund (budget) was at +\$9,400 and the General Fund was around -\$15,000. He went on to review the current finances of the township, stating that the township currently has about \$357,000 in the bank and that we are standing on "firm ground". The Sewage Fund is fine right now. We just made our semi-annual payment of \$25,000. In the next couple of months, we will be getting a lot of yearly payments which will help the sewage. The budget will be advertised. If you want to review the budget make an appointment here at the office.

PAVILION RENTAL AGREEMENT: The pavilion rental will be increased to \$50. There has been a sign holder placed for whoever the pavilion is reserved for. Tom Wilson suggested that it be increased to \$100. The inside room will still be a donation for the use.

BUILDING MAINTENANCE UPDATES: Sup. Ruffo talked about the well. We had a busted line and it is now fixed. Chad Lilley came to help the township. They placed a cover over the well head for future need & reference to its location. Sup. Hanes gave an update on the 2nd Street garage. It is officially finished. They ended up doing a little more work that originally planned. Fixed the flashing around the doors and chimney. There will be a new sign with our logo placed.

ELK COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN: Sup. Ruffo explained the Elk Co. Hazard Mitigation Plan that has been worked on for the past year with the county. Sup. Mong made the motion to adopt the plan. Sup. Hanes made the second.

MILITARY BANNERS: Sup. Hanes will hand over the information packet to whoever wants to start that. It has who to order from, how the orders and sizing go. She recommended starting it in the spring.

ROADMASTERS REPORT: No Comments or questions.

TOWNSHIP PUBLIC FORUM:

Dee Chaney – said they School House Committee had a bake sale during the elections. They had many donations and she said it worked out really well. She said they are having a "Community Christmas Tree Decorating" on Dec. 3rd at 3:00. They will be attempting to go caroling later in the day. All are invited.

Dee Chaney – questioned whether we were ready for the snow? Sup. Ruffo commented that we have all our antiskid and salt stocked, equipment is ready when the time comes.

TOWNSHIP PORTION OF THE MEETING ADJOURNED:

FIRST: Supervisor Mong COMMENTS: None SECOND: Supervisor Hanes YES: 3 NO: 0

SEWAGE MEETING MINUTES

MOTION TO ACCEPT OCTOBER 2023 SEWAGE MEETING MINUTES:

FIRST: Supervisor Mong

COMMENTS: None

SECOND: Supervisor Hanes

YES: 3 NO: 0

MOTION TO ACCEPT OCTOBER 2023 SEWAGE TREASURER'S REPORT:

FIRST: Supervisor Mong

COMMENTS: None

SECOND: Supervisor Hanes

YES: 3 NO: 0

PENNVEST FUNDING OFFER: Sup. Ruffo explained the offer from PennVest that came back for a loan of \$243,000 and a grant of \$106,000. We have had a couple conversations with PennVest and our Engineers and it is all calculated on our finances. The work has to get done. We only have 2 options. One is taking this money and getting this done. Or the second would be to get permission to cut straight across to Trout Run Road. DEP will be "holding our feet" to get this done. We have a few months before this can get done. We have to advertise to get bids to get an idea of how much this will cost us to do that. The process will start at the meeting on November 15th. It will be up to the next administration to decide on what direction they want to go with it. If we accept the loan there may be a need to increase the sewage bills of \$3.50 per month to help cover the loan. We built this 12 years ago. Four or Five years in and it wasn't functioning appropriately and so we had to go out and find money to bring it up to speed. Only to now determine that there is another problem. Sup. Ruffo explained that he cannot guarantee that there won't be any other issues, but he certainly hopes that it will be. The last piece of the system is to put clean water out into Trout Run. Bob Davis questioned what the debt level is for the sewage plant currently. Our initial loan we still owe over a million dollars. The second loan from PennVest was for 30 years. (owe over \$200,000) Sup. Ruffo explained that DEP came and said that Benezette had to get sewage. We have been on a consent order for 6 or 7 years. Sup. Ruffo went on to explain what all had been done at the sewage plant & what needs to be done in order to maintain the plant. The issue now is the flow meter. We have a temporary pump to fix the issue, but we need to put a permanent pump in. We have to either put a permanent pump in or cut across the neighbor's property to get to Trout Run. Bob Davis commented that right now it feels like we are in a spiral and the debt is starting to pile up, he's wondering what is the next step. At what point will we be okay? Sup. Ruffo believes that if we fix this flow through piece we are heading in the right direction. We can handle replacing pumps and general maintenance. When this plant was constructed, it was designed to handle about 30,000 gallons of flow per day. During the winter is about 4-5,000 gallons, but during the summer/fall we do about 15-20,000 gallons of flow per day. The last thing we want to do is to take out another loan. We are hoping it will come in at a lower cost. Bob Davis explained that even though the whole township isn't in the sewage district it still affects the whole township. Dee Chaney asked if it would be in our best interest to run the sewage up Winslow Hill further. Mark Nero plans on extending the sewage up to his property by the bed & breakfast. Once it is finished, he will turn it over to the Township. It will only increase are sewage customers by a half a dozen. John Roush explained if we could extend it down through Grant, we could extend it by about 300 places. However, the only way that could ever happen would be through a grant. Supervisor Mong made the motion that we advertise to get bids for the project. Supervisor Hanes made the second motion.

SEWAGE OPERATOR COMPENSATION: Holly is our licensed operator and will be done at the end of November. Jeff Stefanak went to get his license to be the operator. Currently we pay Holly \$950 per month to be our operator and she visits the plant every few months. We need to have discussion on what to pay Jeff. We will have Holly to be our consultant for a few months. More discussion will come.

SEWAGE OPERATOR'S REPORT: In the packets. No comments or questions received.

SEWAGE PUBLIC FORUM:

Dorothy Trayer – questioned the building that is going up on top of the hill.... She questioned that it is going on a strip job... She explained that a business needs to have a restroom. She questioned if the sewage can handle it.

SEWAGE MEETING ADJOURNED:

FIRST: Supervisor Mong

COMMENTS: None

SECOND: Supervisor Hanes

YES: 3 NO: 0