West Pikeland Township

Budget Work Session #1

Meeting Minutes

September 30, 2026, 6:30 PM
1645 Art School Road, Chester Springs, PA 19425, US

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Board of Supervisors Present: Chair Thomas McLewee Jr., Supervisor Bryan Maher, Supervisor Steven Costa, Supervisor Harold Hallman III, Vice Chair Noreen Vigilante

Also Present: Township Manager Joan Blatcher, Chief of Police Tom Goggin, Township Secretary Jennifer Wachsmuth

Absent: Township Treasurer Doreen Guistwhite

I. Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Chair McLewee Jr.

II. Finances Pertaining to the Purchase of 1001 Kimberton

Before proceeding to the line-by-line budget review, Supervisor Costa presented a self-prepared financial analysis of the 1001 Kimberton Road building transaction. He expressed concern that rather than being captured in a distinct department or cost center, the revenues and expenses associated with the transaction were spread throughout the broader budget with no consolidated synopsis.

Supervisor Costa walked the Board through his analysis. In the 2026 projections column, he identified $5,000,000 in miscellaneous revenue—which he attributed to $3,000,000 in loan proceeds and $2,000,000 from the anticipated sale of the current building—offset by $3,100,000 in building purchase costs (inclusive of approximately $100,000 in soft costs), yielding an estimated excess cash position of $1,900,000 for 2026. Turning to the 2027 budget, he identified $234,000 in debt service, $24,000 for a police department leaseback of the current building during construction, and $2,729,000 for Kimberton Road renovations, for a total of approximately $2,987,000 in 2027 expenditures. With no corresponding lease revenue budgeted in 2027, Supervisor Costa concluded the transaction showed a shortfall of approximately $1,200,000 to be covered by reserves.

He further noted that the 2027 figures did not appear to include an estimated $100,000 for initial solar panel expenditures, nor did they address the cost of build-out for portions of the building intended for future tenants or projected rental income that would presumably help service the

$234,000 annual debt obligation. Supervisor Costa asked the Board and administration to confirm how the shortfall would be financed and whether the transaction could truly be characterized as tax-neutral.

Supervisor Maher acknowledged the general conclusion that a shortfall exists, though he noted some disagreement with the specific figures and indicated he needed time to process the numbers. Supervisor Maher also clarified that the $2,729,000 renovation figure currently incorporates the best available quote of $1,630,000 for the police facility build-out, which he noted was likely to decrease as the scope of the facility has since been reduced; no updated cost estimate has yet been produced.

Township Manager Blatcher stated she had been firming up several line items since the Treasurer's absence and would present updated figures at the next budget meeting. She committed to responding in advance of that meeting so the Board could prepare questions.

A discussion arose regarding the availability of a living cost-tracking spreadsheet for all 1001 Kimberton Road expenditures. Township Manager Blatcher indicated the document had been accessible since May via a shared link sent to all supervisors. Supervisor Costa and Supervisor Hallman III indicated they had not been actively using the document and requested that a static version be emailed to the Board on a weekly basis. Township Manager Blatcher agreed to provide a weekly static document, with the understanding that it may reflect data that is stale relative to the live version.

Township Manager Blatcher was directed to present a reconciled financial analysis of the 1001 Kimberton Road transaction at the next budget meeting, including updated renovation estimates, projected rental income, and a plan addressing the reserve shortfall.

III. 2027 Budget – Line by Line Review

The Board proceeded through the proposed 2027 budget on a section-by-section basis. Supervisor Costa opened with two overarching observations before the line-by-line discussion: first, that overall revenues are essentially flat year-over-year (approximately $50,000 increase), and second, that a comparison of 2026 year-end projections against 2027 budgeted figures reveals approximately $150,000 in potential savings across miscellaneous line items, exclusive of payroll. He urged the administration and Treasurer to revisit each expense line and bring the 2027 budget in line with projected actual 2026 spending wherever feasible.

(Sections 301–380)

Sections 301, 310, and 320 prompted limited discussion. Supervisor Vigilante raised a question regarding the TV cable franchise revenue (Section 321), noting a projected decline from approximately $72,500 to a budget of $64,000. Township Secretary Wachsmuth explained this reflects a broader trend of residents cutting cable subscriptions. The Board also noted that a consortium arrangement with neighboring townships regarding a Comcast franchise matter may be ongoing, and Township Manager Blatcher committed to researching the status of that agreement.

Supervisor Maher noted that for analytical purposes, he had stripped the county grant revenue (account 357.011) from the total revenue figure, arriving at a more conservative baseline of

$2,810,682 before carry-forwards, which he viewed as a truer picture of the township's recurring revenue base. The Board agreed this was a useful lens without recommending any change to how grant revenue is presented in the budget document.

(Sections 400–407)

Supervisor Maher identified a discrepancy between two budget documents for account 400.321 (telephone), where the main budget listed $9,100 and the supplemental schedule listed $6,400, a potential savings of nearly $3,000 warranting reconciliation. The Board agreed to remove the $2,700 line item for supervisor cell phones (account 400.320) from the 2027 budget, as the Board deemed it an unnecessary expense.

Township Manager Blatcher raised the possibility of providing supervisors with tablets to reduce paper and printing costs, noting it would be a one-time upfront investment. Several supervisors indicated they would bring their own personal devices and declined the offer, though the concept was acknowledged favorably for the long term.

(Sections 401–402)

Township Manager Blatcher disclosed that she had not previously enrolled in the township's health benefits plan as she carried coverage from a prior employer, but that she had asked the Treasurer to include the cost of her potential enrollment ($42,000) in the 2027 budget. After brief discussion, the Board agreed that personnel compensation matters—including salaries and health benefits—were more appropriately addressed in executive session, with Supervisor Maher noting it was prudent to budget for the health benefit even if Township Manager Blatcher ultimately did not take it, in order to accurately reflect the full cost of the position for future reference.

The Board acknowledged that several staff positions reflect proposed salary increases significantly above cost of living. Supervisor Costa stated his opposition to any salary increases in excess of cost of living given the township's flat revenue situation, while Supervisor Maher argued that below-market compensation leads to turnover, loss of institutional knowledge, and difficulty recruiting qualified candidates. The Board agreed to transfer the detailed compensation discussion to executive session.

A secondary discussion concerned succession planning for the Treasurer position and whether to hire a part-time bookkeeper. Supervisor Vigilante expressed concern that the departure of the current Treasurer—who has extensive institutional knowledge—would be severely disruptive and supported proactive planning. Supervisor Costa strongly disagreed, arguing that the township has operated without such redundancy for years and that adding staff should only follow a demonstrated, data-supported need. Supervisor Hallman III referenced the township's auditor's management letter, which included a recommendation to formalize an accounting procedures manual recommendation that remained outstanding from prior years. The Board acknowledged the concern but did not take formal action, with Supervisor Costa reiterating that any additional staffing would require a documented workload justification before receiving his support.

(Section 407)

Supervisor Maher inquired about several software subscriptions, including Canva and Adobe Acrobat. Township Secretary Wachsmuth explained that Canva is used for township graphics, signage, and communications, and that Adobe is used for PDF creation and redaction. The Board

found these expenditures reasonable. A question arose about the IT services contract (account 407.452), which showed a significant increase from $14,800 budgeted to approximately $38,000 projected for 2026. Supervisor Maher noted this was attributable to a one-time technology migration completed during the current year, and that associated support costs are expected to roll off in 2027. The Board also discussed whether a consortium purchasing arrangement might exist for common municipal software and directed Township Manager Blatcher to explore that possibility through PSATS or Chester County.

(Section 409)

Discussion on building maintenance noted that the township is projecting only $18,000 in actual spending against a $50,000 budget for 2026. The Board acknowledged that maintenance costs for a newly renovated building may reasonably be lower, though the terms of the police department leaseback arrangement are not yet finalized. The Board noted that the police station uses oil heat through Xpress Energy on auto-delivery, and that no fixed-price contract had been signed for the current season. The Board encouraged exploring whether a price lock could be secured.

(Section 410)

Chief of Police Tom Goggin presented highlights from the police department budget. Key items included:

- A planned transition from .40 caliber to 9mm handguns, which offers lower ammunition cost and improved officer proficiency. The Chief noted this need not occur all at once and could be phased.
- Replacement of aging patrol rifles at approximately $1,500 each.
- The most significant cost driver: the addition of full-time officers to enable 24-hour coverage.
- A proposed part-time administrative position (account 410.124), which would extend current coverage from a part-time, three-day schedule to five days per week. Supervisor Costa was initially skeptical but acknowledged the expansion of activity at the new facility made the case more reasonable.
- Grant opportunities are being pursued for ballistic vests (approximately 50% reimbursement) and potentially for firearm replacement.
- The township is also pursuing the sale of two used police vehicles through municipal bidding, with proceeds expected to offset capital costs.
- Policy and procedure development efforts were discussed. The Chief described the Lexipol policy platform ($30,000 to initiate) as cost-prohibitive and indicated he is pursuing alternative accredited policy sources with assistance from Township Manager Blatcher.
- The Chief noted the animal control situation remains unsettled following the departure of a prior provider. A new arrangement has been made with a North Coventry-area vendor

at $3,500 base cost plus $500 per animal. The Board discussed the prior SPCA arrangement and billing disputes.

- The Board discussed the potential acquisition of a microchip reader to facilitate quicker animal returns, and a UTV for emergency response access in open areas. The Chief noted the county may be able to provide some equipment on loan for events such as the fall festival.

(Sections 411–470)

The Board moved through the remaining sections at a higher level, noting that sections covering fire protection and ambulance contributions (411, 413), code enforcement (414), emergency management (415), and community development (460) offered limited opportunity for adjustment and contained no items requiring immediate discussion.

For public works (430), the Board noted significant salary increases similar to those discussed in administration, which were deferred to executive session. Supervisor Maher raised the question of whether additional public works expenditures—particularly vehicle and equipment maintenance—could be partially charged to open space or liquid fuels funds rather than general fund, noting that if a documented percentage of work occurs on open space lands, a corresponding portion of maintenance costs could arguably be allocated there. Township Manager Blatcher acknowledged it is a "fine line" and agreed it merited closer analysis.

Regarding highway and snow removal (432), Township Manager Blatcher noted that no bids had been received for snow removal services.

For parks and recreation (454), the Board noted a significant number of red (over-budget) line items and asked the Treasurer to review each against 2026 projections to identify savings. The mowing contract was noted as running through 2027 under a two-year agreement. Supervisor Vigilante noted that the township has outstanding grant reimbursement from Phoenixville that has not yet been received. Township Secretary Wachsmuth agreed to investigate the park dumpster cost discrepancy.

The capital projects summary section was briefly reviewed. The Board noted that the playground project is largely grant-funded, the traffic signal will be covered by pooled funds, and the Kimberton Road building renovation represents the primary capital expenditure.

IV. Public Comment / Question and Answer

Jeff Kern addressed the Board, commenting on the pattern of double-digit percentage salary increases appearing in consecutive budget cycles and asking whether the positions in question are competitive in the labor market. He also raised a concern that bonuses paid in 2025 did not appear to have been captured as a formal line item in the budget and suggested that if bonuses are to be considered in the future, an anticipated bonus pool should be included as a distinct budget item.

Chair McLewee Jr. and Vice Chair Vigilante responded that bonuses in prior years had been discretionary and tied to specific circumstances (such as an employee covering a high volume of extra shifts, or a prior manager working at a reduced salary).

Sue McElroy asked which Board members had received and accessed the shared link to the 1001 Kimberton Road expenditure spreadsheet. Chair McLewee Jr. confirmed that all supervisors had been sent the same email. Supervisor Costa stated he could not confirm if received the link, and Supervisor Hallman III indicated he tends not to click links due to past difficulties. Township Manager Blatcher confirmed the link had been sent to all supervisors and offered to resend it. Supervisor Costa indicated he would maintain the email with the link for ongoing reference.

V. Adjourn

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:29 PM. The next Budget Work Session was confirmed for October 14, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Wachsmuth
Township Secretary