



Wednesday, January 10, 2024
Vacancy Board Meeting – 6:00 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman David Torrey

A. Roll Call

- Commissioner Kelly - Present
- Commissioner Hodges - Present
- Commissioner Roth - Present
- Commissioner Johns - Present

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. All public sessions of the South Whitehall Township Board of Commissioners are electronically recorded, filed, and posted on the Township Website for Public access.

B. Public /Virtual Meeting Rules

4. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Public Notice – January 10, 2024, 6:00 p.m., Vacancy Board Special Meeting.

Chairman Torrey, for the record, read through the advertisement for this evening's meeting.

Township Manager Tom Petrucci wanted to recap why this Vacancy Special Meeting is necessary and why we are here.

• Background Information:

Section 530 (Vacancies in General), (a) of the First Class Township Code provides that the BOC has 30 days to appoint a successor when a vacancy occurs in the elected office of Commissioner due to termination of residency from the Township.

The office of the Township Solicitor has clarified that the vacancy in the elected office of Commissioner was technically created the day that former Commissioner, David M. Kennedy, terminated his residency, which was Thursday, November 30, 2023. The Board had 30 days, which was Saturday, December 30, 2023, from said termination of residency date to appoint a successor. That deadline has now passed. In accordance with the First Class Township Code, the Vacancy Board has a deadline of January 14th to take action on the appointment of a successor.

The BOC previously convened a special meeting on Thursday, December 28, 2023, at 6:00 PM for the following purpose(s), as advertised in accordance with the Sunshine Act in the December 27th issue of the Lehigh Valley Press:

1. To interview candidates for the vacant position of Township Commissioner;
2. To consider the appointment, by resolution, of a successor to fill the vacancy in the position of Township Commissioner, in accordance with the requirements of the First Class Township Code; and

3. To consider any other business which may come before the Board of Commissioners.

Following Township social media, Township website, Morning Call and Lehigh Valley News online dissemination, South Whitehall Township received a total of 8 applications for the current Commissioner vacancy.

The following candidates were interviewed during the Thursday, December 28, 2023 special meeting:

1. Manjit Singh Walla
2. James Sullivan
3. Adeel Ahmad
4. Glenn Guanowsky
5. Chris Peischl
6. Jamal Ahmed
7. Jeffrey Kemmerer
8. Michael Pascal

Following interviews, the Board of Commissioners elected to take additional time to review the candidates given the number of applications received. Accordingly, a special meeting of the Vacancy Board was scheduled for Wednesday, January 10, 2024 at 6:00 PM. The Morning Call advertisement ran in the January 3rd issue of the Morning Call.

- This Evening's Options for Consideration for Possible Official Action:

The Vacancy Board, which consists of the Board of Commissioners and Chairman, Mr. David Torrey, may consider the filling of the vacant elected office of Township Commissioner in accordance with the First Class Township Code. A summary of the options for the consideration of the Board of Commissioners is provided as follows:

1. Appoint, by Resolution, a resident of the Township to fill the vacancy in the office of elected Commissioner during this evening, Wednesday, January 10, 2024 6:00 PM Vacancy Board special meeting. Should the Vacancy Board resolve to take this action, a Resolution is listed on the agenda to allow for this official action (in accordance with the Sunshine Act). If the Vacancy Board takes this action, the selected appointee will need to fulfill the Oath of Office requirement prior to taking office (that action will not be taken during the January 10th meeting).
 2. Should the Vacancy Board/Board of Commissioners not make the appointment before January 14th, 2024 deadline, the matter then heads to the Court of Common Pleas. The vacancies would be filled upon presentation of a petition signed by not less than 15 registered electors of the Township.
- Vacancy Board Special Meeting Procedures for this Evening are as follows:
 1. Each member of the Board of Commissioners and Vacancy Board Chairman will be afforded the opportunity to identify a candidate who he or she wants to suggest as the appointee to the Board of Commissioners. This is intended as an opportunity for each Board member to expound on the virtues of a particular candidate.
 2. Each member of the Vacancy Board will then be afforded the opportunity to make a motion to nominate (and appoint by resolution) a successor to the vacant Board of Commissioners position. It is important to note that the first candidate to receive a majority vote of three or more Vacancy Board members will be the person successfully appointed by the Board.

At this point, Township Manager Tom Petrucci turned the meeting back over to Chairman Torrey.

B. Review of Applications:

- **Comments by Vacancy Board Members (8:45)**

- **Commissioner Diane Kelly** thanked all candidates for their interest in serving our community. She appreciated learning about why each were interested in being a commissioner. She explained that one candidate, however, stood out from all the rest. She was impressed by his compassion and life-long commitment to serving our community. This candidate is Mr. Chris Peischl. His resume reflects an extensive history of volunteer serving in SWT, 15 years on our PSC, 5 years on the SWT Water & Sewer Authority, 16 years on the Emergency Management Team, and 40 years of service as a Volunteer Fire Fighter, in addition to coaching baseball. He has gained an incredible amount of knowledge and experience of our Township and working with others, thus the reason he would be a tremendous benefit to have on the Board. Additionally, he attends many of the SWT meetings, sharing his perspective and asking questions. He mentioned in the interview that he would like to maintain the quality of life that he was able to experience as a life-long resident of SWT, and would like to see his children afforded that same opportunity as well. Mr. Peischl also shared his knowledge of the historical roots of our Township and his desire to see that the legacy of SWT be preserved. All of these factors, along with his decades of giving and volunteering, make Mr. Peischl uniquely qualified to be the best candidate to fill the vacant Commissioner seat.
- **Commissioner Monica Hodges (11:30)** explained that we have 8 very impressive candidates who are obviously leaders in their areas of expertise. She thanked all for their time to apply and interview for the vacant position. She said that serving our community will be one of the most rewarding and humbling experiences in your lifetime. She said it is her hope that the 7 who are not appointed will choose to become more involved by joining a Board or Commission. She said there is a candidate who has decades long of service, and who stands out. He is one who attends meetings, speaks, asks questions, as well as make suggestions. He served our country in the Navel reserves, served out Township on the Board of Authority, and presently is on the PSC. He has served our community as a Volunteer Fire Fighter and Emergency Services, our youth and their families through coaching and emergency management programs. He stated the importance of finding a common ground during times of disagreement. He stressed the importance of historical preservation, in passing along the knowledge with the historical roots of our Township. He recently campaigned in the 2023 election, speaking with thousands of residents in pursuit of this position. Therefore, she feels that Chris Peischl should succeed David Kennedy on the Board of Commissioners.
- **Commissioner Jacob Roth (16:40)** thanked the 8 applicants for applying for this position. He was pleased we had so many applicants this time. He also said that he hoped the candidates would choose to serve our community in a variety of ways. He asked that they apply for the positions on our Boards and Commissions. He said that all 8 of the candidates are more than qualified to sit on this Board, as well as any of our volunteer Boards and Commissions. He said that there is one candidate, however, who he feels is the best candidate for this job at this time. He believes that person to be Chris Peischl. He did not want to repeat everything that has been said by Commissioners Kelly and Hodges, but in reviewing his applications, he pared Mr. Peischl's strengths down to a few things. 1. This Board is going to be facing a number challenges in the coming years, and with Chris Peischl joining the Board, there is no learning curve. He will be bringing all his previous experience with him to this dais should he be selected this evening. 2. Mr. Peischl is an independent thinker. He will disagree without being disagreeable. He will seek to find a common ground. He will challenge all of us on our views. This will add value to our discussions and value to our Board. 3. Mr. Peischl comes highly recommended. We received four letters of recommendation for Mr. Peischl. 4. Mr. Peischl's entire life has been about serving something bigger than himself—in his career, emergency services, his time at

Greenwalds Fire Company, his time in the Navy, his time as a coach, his time as a member of the Water & Sewer Authority, his time as a member on the PSC. Everything he has done for the past 40 years, he has given of himself for something bigger than himself. These are the things that makes him stand out as a candidate. It is hard to measure just how many people are better off in this community and outside because Chris Peischl stepped up to serve. He went on to say he can only imagine how many people will be better off in this community because he stepped up to serve on this Board. It would be an honor to nominate him to serve the remainder of David M. Kennedy's term.

- **Commissioner Thomas Johns** (20:45) thanked everyone who did apply for this position. He explained that he does not really know Mr. Peischl so he cannot comment. He went on to say that his feeling of who is the most qualified to serve and fill the current vacancy is Mr. Jamal Ahmed. He said that he knows that due to Mr. Ahmed's business and traveling all over the country he was not able to previously serve on any of our Boards and Commissions. However, with his background, he felt that he was the most qualified person to step in and fill Mr. Kennedy's position here in SWT.
- **Chairman David Torrey** (21:53) said he considers this job the top job in the Township and that you have to earn your keep and work your way up to it. Get a feel how government works, especially local government. He said that he echoes what the three other commissioners have said about Chris Peischl. He said he ran fire calls for 30 years with him. He said much is learned from running fire calls—Mr. Peischl knows the Township. Also, Mr. Torrey was a history major and he thought he knew the Township. He said that Mr. Peischl really knows the history and the preserving land and quality of life. We need to consider—where is the history of the Township? He also wants to take into consideration that Mr. Peischl received 2,838 votes. Also, he likes the fact that he served on the Water & Sewer Authority, especially in light of the LCA study/proposal which will come before the Township, he will have a basic knowledge with regard to this. These are some of the reasons he would vote for Chris Peischl. In closing, Mr. Torrey said there are very qualified candidates here, and it is his hope that they will apply for some of the other vacancies and terms that are expired as well. This concluded his comments.

C. Call for Nomination. (25:35)

- **A Resolution of the Vacancy Board of South Whitehall Township, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, to Appoint __ as Successor Commissioner to Fill Vacant Seat of David M. Kennedy.**

Mr. Torrey asked if we have a motion to fill this vacancy.

Commissioner Roth made a MOTION that we move to appoint Chrisi Peischl as successor Commissioner to fill the vacancy of David M. Kennedy. Commissioner Kelly seconded the motion.

- Roll Call Vote by Chairman Torrey as follows: (26:32)
 - Commissioner Diane Kelly AYE
 - Commissioner Monica Hodges AYE
 - Commissioner Jacob Roth AYE
 - Commissioner Thomas Johns NAY
 - Chairman David Torrey AYE

Motion carried. Vote 4:1.

Mr. Christopher Peischl has been appointed as successor commissioner to David M. Kennedy.

5. COURTESY OF THE FLOOR – None.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

7. ADJOURNMENT (27:24)

At 6:27 a MOTION was made to adjourn this meeting by Commissioner Kelly, which was seconded by Commissioner Roth. All in favor; none opposed.

8. **APPROVED: January 17, 2024.** A MOTION was made by Commissioners Roth and Hodges to approve the January 10, 2024 – Vacancy Board Meeting Minutes. All in favor; none opposed. 1 abstention by Chris Peischl.