HARRIS TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Strategic Planning Meeting Minutes
August 25, 2026

Board Members in Attendance: Dennis Hameister, Chair
Frank Harden, Vice Chair
Tracey Moriarty
Chris Murrell
Nigel Wilson

Staff in Attendance: Mark Boeckel, Township Manager

Public in Attendance: None

Public in Attendance via Zoom: None

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Hameister called the August 25, 2026 meeting to order at 11:10 AM.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS:

There were no citizens comments.

3. NEW AGENDA ITEMS:

There were no new items to add to the agenda.

4. MID-YEAR FINANCIAL UPDATE:

Mr. Boeckel provided the Board of Supervisors with a brief update on revenues and expenditures. He stated that revenues are trending at or slightly above budgeted expectations. Real estate transfer taxes were trending well above average due to the sale of several properties.

He said that expenditures are trending at or below budgeted amounts in almost all categories, except for finance payroll, maintenance payroll, codification services, and legal services. Finance payroll was higher due to staff shortages in the office earlier in the year and maintenance payroll had increased due to an unanticipated retirement. Codification was not completed in 2025, which resulted in higher than anticipated costs in 2026. These costs should decline in 2027. He also noted that the cost of legal services was higher than expected due to several ongoing projects, administration of new ordinances, and other factors.

5. UPDATE ON PEOPLE, PARTNERSHIPS, AND PROJECTS:

Mr. Boeckel provided an overview of several memos included with the agenda. The memos addressed recruitment and retention, establishment of pay scales, proposed changes to the personnel policy, and proposed personnel changes.

He explained that the Township needs to ensure it remains competitive to recruit and retain employees. He described their recent recruitment experience and the difficulty in finding qualified applicants, as well as candidates not attending their interviews. The Board and Manager discussed societal changes, demographic challenges, and cost of living, all impacting the ability to attract new employees.

Mr. Boeckel noted that residents have no choice on where they receive municipal services, and we need to ensure we can maintain adequate staffing to provide those services. General discussion ensued about recruitment and retention, and the value of recognizing Township staff for their hard work. The Board supported being proactive and adding employee appreciation to the budget. The Board also supported providing funding to send maintenance staff to additional training and educational opportunities.

Vice-Chair Harden suggested that the Board recognize the Maintenance Superintendent at the upcoming Township dinner. The Board also suggested buying flowers or something for his wife. The Board discussed increasing the uniform budget to reflect the periodic purchase of clothing for staff and the Board.

Mr. Boeckel provided an overview of the second memo, which addressed the establishment of pay grades and scales. He explained the purpose of both and the methodology he used to create his recommendation. He noted that a professional survey could be conducted if the Board was interested.

Based upon his analysis, current staff are making competitive market wages but recommended that the minimum starting salary be increased for the maintenance laborer positions. He noted that two positions exceeded the maximum he was recommending. He said that the Board could take several different approaches for these positions, including exempting current staff from the maximum or providing longevity pay.

Supervisor Murrell said he supported establishing grades and scales for transparency and encouraging longevity. Vice-Chair Harden said merit increases should be used to reward high-performing employees and encourage accountability among underperforming employees. General discussion ensued about COLA increases, merit increases, and other benefits provided by other municipalities in the region.

Supervisor Moriarty spoke in favor of not having a salary cap by position, as some employees provide exceptional value and the Township should retain them. Mr. Boeckel said his goal in setting a minimum starting salary for each position is to remain competitive and make recruitment easier when the time comes. He stated that the merit pool that was established when he began as Manager has allowed him to provide increases based upon merit, rather than

standardizing all raises regardless of performance, which was the previous policy. He also noted that he offers financial incentives to employees that obtain certifications or licenses that are needed for the road crew.

There was consensus to move forward with the proposed minimum starting wages but not establish a maximum cap for any position. Mr. Boeckel said that the revised pay scales would be incorporated into the 2027 budget.

General discussion ensued about a COLA for 2027. Vice-Chair Harden suggested that the COLA not be higher than the social security COLA.

Mr. Boeckel then reviewed the memo on personnel policy updates. He outlined potential policy amendments for vacation accrual, use of vacation time at the end of employment, health insurance continuation after retirement, early retirement severance pay, retirement eligibility, and operation hours and meal periods.

Mr. Boeckel stated that the vacation accrual policy could be amended to allow less carry-over from year to year, and that employees with higher balances could have a portion of that time bought out over a five-year period until balances were reduced. Supervisor Moriarty said that she was not comfortable with employees carrying two years' worth of vacation and that employees should take their vacation time. Mr. Boeckel said that it can be a challenge for staff to take vacation when we have a small number of full-time staff to provide office coverage. General discussion ensued about potential amendments to the vacation accrual policy. There was consensus to reduce the vacation accrual cap and provide a buyout strategy for anyone exceeding that cap.

The Board discussed the use of vacation at the end of employment. The current policy does not restrict vacation usage. General discussion ensued about how vacation accrual works and the ability to use it throughout the year. The Board asked the manager to prepare proposed amendments addressing vacation leave accrual and usage.

The Board briefly discussed the policy for extending health insurance after early retirement and recommended that the manager incorporate the changes proposed in the memo.

The Board briefly discussed the early-retirement severance policy. Vice-Chair Harden said that this policy was put in place to help employees that are retiring early to pay for their healthcare. He agreed that the policy needs to be better defined.

The Board supported the manager's recommendation to change eligibility to participate in the Township's retirement plan. New employees would be able to participate immediately but a vesting schedule would also be established.

Mr. Boeckel reviewed the memo that included several personnel proposals. He explained the need to hire additional staff and the ability to partially fund those positions by eliminating existing contracts for services. The positions proposed include a part-time building and grounds maintenance laborer and a part-time management analyst. He also discussed the potential to hire

a summer intern from Penn State.
Vice-Chair Harden said that Township staff has not grown to match the needs of the growing community and that he supports the positions. General discussion ensued about the ability to attract part-time staff versus full-time staff, as well as the duties of the two proposed part-time positions. Mr. Boeckel explained that the Township has been struggling to provide services with existing staff, and that even as staffing changes occur, the proposed positions will still be necessary to maintain service levels.

Mr. Boeckel provided a brief update on the Township's workers' compensation policy, which includes the fire company. He said that our rates will likely increase due to several large claims that are pending in litigation.

6. WEBSITE UPGRADE:

Mr. Boeckel stated that the Township has been looking into completing a comprehensive update of the website. The current website was designed over a decade ago and some of the functionality is no longer supported. In addition, the Township needs to meet ADA accessibility requirements by August 2028, and an upgrade should address any potential accessibility issues.

The Board briefly discussed the request and agreed that funding should be included in the 2027 budget for an upgraded website.

7. FACILITIES IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

Mr. Boeckel reviewed a memo that addressed needed improvements to the Township office building and surrounding facilities. He proposed budgeting monies from the special projects fund to help make these improvements. He stated that he lacks the expertise to prepare bid documents for these projects. Vice-Chair Harden suggested that there are people in the community that can help with this. He also spoke in support of making audio/visual improvements to the meeting room.

Mr. Boeckel said that he's had several solar developers approach him about adding solar panels to Township facilities. General discussion ensued. There was no consensus to consider solar proposals at this time.

8. 2027 BUDGET PREPARATION:

Mr. Boeckel said that budget preparation will begin in the next few weeks and recommended that the Board meet on October 14th and October 28th to conduct their reviews. He noted that he would be unavailable to meet on October 21st due to the annual ICMA Conference. Supervisor Wilson said that he would be traveling over the 14th of October and would not be available to meet. The Board agreed to meet to discuss the budget on October 22nd and October 28th, with both meetings being at 7 pm.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Supervisors, Chair Hameister adjourned the meeting at 1:26 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Boeckel, AICP
Township Secretary