HARRIS TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Special Budget Meeting Minutes
October 26, 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 Dwight Miller, Finance Manager
Public in Attendance:	None
Public in Attendance via Zoom:	None

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Hameister called the October 26, 2026 meeting to order at 4:34 PM.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS:

There were no citizens comments.

3. NEW AGENDA ITEMS:

There were no new items to add to the agenda.

4. BUDGET REQUESTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Mr. Boeckel provided an overview of budget requests that have been historically funded by the Township as well as a new request from CentreSafe, which is the former Women's Resource Center. He said that the Township was billed twice this year for the Get Outdoors fishing program hosted by Trout Unlimited.

Chair Harden asked for additional details on the Keystone Water Resources Center, and general discussion ensued. Supervisor Moriarty asked if funding for Memorial Day and Hometown Christmas was being provided to the Historical Society, and Mr. Boeckel confirmed that it was.

A motion was made by Vice-Chair Harden and seconded by Supervisor Moriarty to include funding for all requests listed in the agenda, including Get Outdoors and

CentreSafe.

5. 2027-2031 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM:

Mr. Boeckel provided an overview of the 2027-2031 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He said that there are several projects in 2027 that should be discussed. He said that the sidewalk improvement project for the Village is planned for spring, but that there are several sections of sidewalk that lead nowhere and will likely never connect. The Township may want to consider abandoning those sections in favor of facilities located on the other side of the street.

Chair Hameister asked about the liquid fuels grant that was submitted to Centre County and if that was included in this project. Mr. Boeckel said that if approved, that grant will help reduce the overall cost for this project by funding new ADA accessible ramps in the Village.

Supervisor Moriarty inquired about the brick sidewalk in front of 229 East Main Street, expressing concern for the loss of character. Mr. Boeckel said that according to the Township Engineer, maintaining ADA accessibility of a brick sidewalk is nearly impossible. He said the Township is planning to have that section of sidewalk stamped and colored red to keep the existing brick appearance. Supervisor Moriarty said that is an acceptable solution.

Supervisor Murrell asked if the Township was planning to turn maintenance responsibility over to the adjacent residents. Mr. Boeckel said that the Board had previously discussed doing that, and it is common practice in most municipalities.

Supervisor Moriarty asked if it is fair to pass that responsibility on to adjacent property owners if the trees are going to continue causing issues. She asked if areas like Rockey Ridge, for example, will have less impact on their sidewalks. Mr. Boeckel said that sidewalks in any neighborhood will eventually be impacted by adjacent trees, it's just happening in the Village now because the trees are more mature.

Vice-Chair Harden asked if it was possible to only turn over some sidewalks but retain responsibility for others. Mr. Boeckel said it could potentially be done, but the Board would likely face questions of fairness and equity if some areas of the Township are treated differently. Mr. Harden said he feels the turnover should be universal.

Mr. Boeckel provided a brief overview of the East Drive Stormwater Project. Supervisor Murrell said that the Spring Creek Watershed Commission may be interested in that project.

Chair Hameister asked about the $10,000 set aside for building improvements. Mr. Boeckel said that he is hoping to apply for an LSA grant for improvements, including siding, windows, and a new metal roof, and this would serve as the grant match. General discussion ensued about necessary building improvements and retaining historic character with modern materials.

Chair Hameister asked about the Honeysuckle Drive overlay project. Mr. Boeckel said that the SCBWA installed a new main under the road last year and the road needs to be resurfaced. The water authority will provide some funding to help with the project so the total cost may be less

than budgeted.

Mr. Boeckel gave an overview of proposed park projects in 2027, including the construction of two ADA accessible fishing piers in Tussey Pond Park and the extension of the walking path in Country Place Park.

Mr. Boeckel said that the cost of future overlays exceeds liquid fuels funding for the same period, so projects will either need to be delayed or partially funded through the general fund. Supervisor Moriarty asked if liquid fuels funds will increase this year and Mr. Boeckel said that he does not anticipate an increase. Chair Hameister asked about the road rating system, and Mr. Boeckel said it needs updated.

Mr. Boeckel reviewed some major projects in future years, including playground equipment replacement, bridge repairs, and a stormwater plan.

Chair Hameister asked about traffic signal maintenance being an annual cost. Mr. Boeckel said that the Township budgets $15,000 a year to maintain all signals we are responsible for, and that is typically adequate. This year was an outlier where we spent over that amount. He described some of the equipment and maintenance costs that the Township incurs for these signals.

In response to a question from Chair Hameister, Mr. Boeckel said that the CIP will be on the November 9th agenda for approval.

6. 2027 BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Mr. Boeckel said that the Township is in good financial shape heading into 2027. He said that there is a projected operating deficit, however, actual annual expenses are typically less than budgeted. He also noted that there is a sizeable, unassigned fund balance because of cost savings and unanticipated revenues in 2026.

Mr. Boeckel said that he is not recommending a real estate millage increase in 2027. He said that there is a 0.3 mill for special projects and a 0.2 mill for capital improvements, and that these millage rates sunset every three years. He suggested that this sunset provision be eliminated since the Board can change millage rates any year. General discussion ensued about the purpose and usage of these millages. There was general consensus to eliminate the sunset provision on these millage rates.

General discussion ensued about earned income taxes, local services tax, and the State's discussion on the local use of radar.

Mr. Boeckel discussed the proposed cost of living adjustment for Township staff, noting that the Board had previously suggested using the Social Security COLA as a guideline. The proposed COLA is 3.5%. In response to a question from Chair Hameister, Mr. Boeckel noted that this is consistent with what most other municipalities are providing.

Mr. Boeckel said that the budget also includes the two part-time positions discussed in August.

He said that he didn't anticipate hiring for these positions until a few months into 2027. In response to a question from Supervisor Moriarty, Mr. Boeckel explained the role of the management analyst position. It was agreed that the job could be good for someone that is quasi-retired or that has other commitments that only allow them to do part-time work.

Mr. Boeckel noted that there are no proposed changes to staff benefits but that the cost of health care continues to rise. He stated that the Township would investigate other insurance options in 2027, as he has spoken with colleagues around the State that are paying considerably less than the Township.

Mr. Boeckel stated that the 2027 Maintenance budget is similar to the budget in 2026. The only significant capital expenditure is the purchase of a wheeled excavator that can be used for brush collection. This purchase would be largely funded by a DEP Recycling Grant.

Mr. Boeckel said that he did not include funding for a PSU intern at this time, but that he may ask the Board to allocate funding for an intern if he can identify a suitable project. He said that a human resources related project may be a good fit for an intern. He said that he wanted to wait to propose an intern until he knew there was capacity to support the position and a viable project. The Board discussed the merits of hiring a summer intern.

Supervisor Moriarty asked about how the Township pays for brush collection. Mr. Boeckel explained that the Township leases a property with College Township, and that brush is stored on that property until it is recycled. Supervisor Moriarty said she supports buying land rather than paying a long-term lease. Mr. Boeckel said that he periodically checks to see if land is available, but parcels are beyond what the Township could afford. Supervisor Moriarty asked if the land needs to be in the Township, and he said that it does not. He said that a parcel located in another municipality would result in higher transportation costs. General discussion ensued.

7. POTENTIAL CHANGES TO THE CONTRACT WITH THE STATE COLLEGE BOROUGH POLICE DEPARTMENT:

Mr. Boeckel said that Chief Merrill contacted him a few weeks ago about some potential changes to the police contract between the Borough and the Township. These changes, if approved, would impact both College and Harris Townships. He explained the current process of purchasing time and either receiving a refund or bill following an annual reconciliation. He said that Chief Merrill was proposing the continuation of tracking police hours but eliminating the annual reconciliation process. The Chief suggested establishing a threshold percentage that could still trigger a refund or additional charge, while providing greater budget certainty for participating municipalities. This would be particularly true if a municipality had more police services in one year than what was budgeted.

In response to a question from Supervisor Moriarty, Chair Hameister said that the Township has received several hundred thousand dollars in refunds over the past decade or so. Vice-Chair Harden said that he sees no reason to change something that is working well and has been for decades. In response to a question from Supervisor Murrell, Mr. Miller said that it takes him a few days to do the reconciliation.

Mr. Boeckel said that he doesn't micromanage the police hours, but he does monitor them. His philosophy is that the Township pays for 76 hours a week, he won't request that the police spend less time in the Township just to force a refund.

There was general consensus to not modify the police contract.

8. CRPR DRAFT OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT:

Mr. Boeckel said that the Township has until November 6th to provide feedback on the Memorandum of Understanding for Parks Operation and Maintenance.

Vice-Chair Harden asked about the cost of repairs being the responsibility of the park owner, when the CRPR has a capital fund. Supervisor Moriarty said she has concerns about repairs and the potential cost to the municipalities. With the budgeting and staffing issues facing the CRPR, minor repairs should be the responsibility of the municipality. If CRPR does the work, the municipality should reimburse CRPR for the associated costs.

Mr. Boeckel said that he felt the agreement lacked definition for some terms. Supervisor Murrell said he feels that routine maintenance should be handled by CRPR, but that repairs shouldn't be differentiated between minor and major and that those costs should be the responsibility of the Township.

Vice-Chair Harden said that the Board knows where he stands on this, and that we could stop paying for CRPR to maintain the parks and do it ourselves. He said that major repair and minor repair are relative terms. In response to a question from Chair Hameister, Mr. Boeckel said that CRPR staff will sometimes need to do the installation depending upon the type of equipment. He also said that the COG Articles of Agreement, to his knowledge, wouldn't allow a municipality to withdraw from park maintenance only.

Supervisor Moriarty questioned if CRPR is struggling to keep up with maintenance, how they can also take on the responsibility of completing repairs. Vice-Chair Harden said that we shouldn't give more resources to CRPR until they maintain our parks.

Mr. Boeckel said that he understood the agreement was intended to memorialize the services they currently provide. General discussion ensued about the CRPR and the challenges they face as an agency.

Vice-Chair Harden said that CRPR is a problem and the structure of having a separate authority that sets rates, the agency, and COG. COG is expected to pay the balance, and the agency is playing the COG and Authority off one another. He said that the Agency is now proposing that they do not hire an Assistant Parks Manager and that they hire two positions to help with maintenance.

Supervisor Moriarty said that the problem with Parks and Recreation is solvable. Supervisor Murrell said that Parks and Rec operate under a Cadillac model and that the money will always be there. If we're going to make progress, we need to examine the staffing. There is a tradeoff. In

response to a comment from Supervisor Moriarty about the CRPR staffing structure, Supervisor Murrell said it might be a good time to bring back the Human Resources Committee.

Vice-Chair Harden reminded the Board that they would be voting on the COG budget at the COG meeting that evening. He encouraged the Board to consider voting against the budget since there are so many issues that aren't being resolved. He said he would bring up the Board's concerns at the Finance Committee's after-action discussion. He said he plans to call for a unit vote.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Supervisors, Chair Hameister adjourned the meeting at 6:23 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Boeckel, AICP
Township Secretary