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# **MINUTES**

**March 9, 2026**  
**Regular Public Meeting**

**Board of Commissioners**

**Township of Whitehall**

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**A. CALL TO ORDER**

- 1) The Regular Public Meeting of the Whitehall Township Board of Commissioners was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, March 9, 2026 held at the Whitehall Township Public Meeting Room, with the following in attendance:

**COMMISSIONERS**

Jeffrey J. Warren, President  
Thomas Slonaker, Vice President  
Randy Atiyeh, Secretary  
Ken Snyder  
Elizabeth J. Fox (Absent)  
Lee A. Christman  
Taylor A. Stakes

**TOWNSHIP PERSONNEL**

Joseph J. Marx, Jr., Mayor  
John D. Meyers, Deputy Mayor  
Jack Gross, Esq., Township Solicitor  
Larissa Bruder, Executive Assistant  
  
Elisa Highly, Township Engineer - KCE  
Tina J. Koren, Tax Collector

The meeting was formally opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and a moment of silence for the seven service men and women who were killed in the line of duty in Iran and all the troops serving at home and abroad. Also, to honor the service of the fallen State Police Corporal Timothy J. O'Connor who was fatally wounded while responding to a call of an erratic driver in Chester County. Our hearts remain with these families and keep them in your thoughts during this devastating time.

President WARREN read the statement on fair housing as required.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner SLONAKER moved, seconded by Commissioner STAKES to approve the Minutes of the following meeting:

Regular Public Meeting – February 9, 2026

SIX Commissioners were present and all voted “yes”. Motion carried.

President WARREN announced that the Board held an Executive Session regarding legal and personnel matters .

**B. COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

LoriAnn Fehnel of 3107 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street stated concerns regarding applying to be a member of EMA and receiving a rejection letter without being interviewed.

Denise Sharkazy 3130 Clay Street Street pleaded with the Board to consider changing the garbage fee exoneration guidelines.

David Hassick of 3795 Dogwood Drive would like to get a copy of the LVHN presentation from the last L&L Meeting.

Anthony Kopeck of 3763 Dogwood Drive asked that the Board discuss the following items: Enforcement action of businesses not clearing sidewalks, garbage exoneration changes, adding cameras to the new poles on MacArthur Road and putting the Recreation Center on the ballot as a referendum.

President WARREN announced that the Motions section of the Agenda will be heard next.

**MOTIONS:**

1. A MOTION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP REGARDING THE WHITEHALL PARKWAY PRESERVE ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP AND RESTORATION PLAN

SIX Commissioners were present and five voting “yes”. Motion was approved.

2. A MOTION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP REGARDING THE HELFRICH SPRINGS GRIST MILL & PETER GRIM HOUSE HISTORIC RESTORATION & MAINTENANCE PLAN

SIX Commissioners were present and five voting “yes”. Motion was approved.

**C. PUBLIC HEARING AND VOTING ON ORDINANCES**

1. BILL NO. 5-2026

TITLE: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE OF A PROPOSAL FOR PURCHASE OF ONE 2026 TOYOTA HIGHLANDER XLE VEHICLE FOR THE POLICE INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 3.20 IN THE HOME RULE CHARTER WHICH REQUIRES AUTHORIZATION OF ACQUISITIONS IN EXCESS OF \$25,000 BY ORDINANCE. (POLICE)

President WARREN read Bill No. 5-2026 to the Board.

Commissioner SLONAKER moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner CHRISTMAN

SIX Commissioners were present and all voting “yes”. Bill No 5-2026 was approved.

2. BILL NO. 6-2026

TITLE: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE OF A PROPOSAL FOR PROVIDING OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES FOR STREET LIGHTS FOR WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 3.20 IN THE HOME RULE CHARTER WHICH REQUIRES AUTHORIZATION OF ACQUISITIONS IN EXCESS OF \$25,000 BY ORDINANCE. (PUBLIC WORKS)

President WARREN read Bill No. 6-2026 to the Board.

Commissioner WARREN moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner STAKES

Bill Sharkazy of 3130 Clay Street verified that Diefenderfer Electric will still be doing Maintenance and to contact the Township with an outage issue.

SIX Commissioners were present and five voting “yes”. Bill No 6-2026 was approved.

3. BILL NO. 7-2026

TITLE: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE OF A PROPOSAL FOR PURCHASE OF TWO 2026 FORD F250 4X4 TRUCKS FOR THE PUBLIC WORKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 3.20 IN THE HOME RULE CHARTER WHICH REQUIRES AUTHORIZATION OF ACQUISITIONS IN EXCESS OF \$25,000 BY ORDINANCE. (PUBLIC WORKS/RECREATION)

President WARREN read Bill No. 7-2026 to the Board.

Commissioner SNYDER moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner CHRISTMAN

Commissioner WARREN verified the reason that recreation was getting a truck since it was not a line item in the budget. Deputy Mayor MEYERS explained that during the budget hearings it was discussed and the mechanics determined the truck was needed more than a small front end loader.

SIX Commissioners were present and all voting “yes”. Bill No 7-2026 was approved.

4. BILL NO. 8-2026

TITLE: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE OF A PROPOSAL FOR PURCHASE OF A 2025 CATERPILLAR ASPHALT PAVER FOR THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 3.20 IN THE HOME RULE CHARTER WHICH REQUIRES AUTHORIZATION OF ACQUISITIONS IN EXCESS OF \$25,000 BY ORDINANCE. (PUBLIC WORKS)

President WARREN read Bill No. 8-2026 to the Board.

Commissioner SLONAKER moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner STAKES

SIX Commissioners were present and all voting “yes”. Bill No 8-2026 was approved.

**D. PUBLIC HEARING AND VOTING ON RESOLUTIONS**

1. RESOLUTION NO. 3423

TITLE: A RESOLUTION APPOINTING SEAN ROTH TO SERVE AS A REGULAR MEMBER ON THE WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP ZONING HEARING BOARD. (BOC)

President WARREN read Resolution No. 3423 to the Board.

Commissioner CHRISTMAN moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner STAKES

SIX Commissioners were present and voting “yes”. Resolution No. 3423 was approved.

2. RESOLUTION NO. 3424

TITLE: A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WHITEHALL TO ESTABLISH THE POLICE PENSION CONTRIBUTION RATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE FUND (ADMIN)

President WARREN read Resolution No. 3424 to the Board.

Commissioner SLONAKER moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner STAKES

SIX Commissioners were present and all voting “yes”. Resolution No. 3424 was approved.

3. RESOLUTION NO. 3425

TITLE: A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT FOR ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS OF THE POLICE PENSION FUND. (ADMIN)

President WARREN read Resolution No. 3425 to the Board.

Commissioner SNYDER moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner WARREN

SIX Commissioners were present and all voting “yes”. Resolution No. 3425 was approved.

4. RESOLUTION NO. 3426

TITLE: A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE AMOUNT OF INTEREST RETURN TO BE CREDITED TO POLICE PENSION FUND MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025. (ADMIN)

President WARREN read Resolution No. 3426 to the Board.

Commissioner SLONAKER moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner SNYDER

SIX Commissioners were present and all voting “yes”. Resolution No. 3426 was approved

5. RESOLUTION NO. 3427  
TITLE: A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE REFUND OF PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS, PLUS ACCUMULATED INTEREST FROM THE POLICE PENSION FUND TO FORMER POLICE OFFICER THOMAS C. GEIB. (ADMIN)

President WARREN read Resolution No. 3427 to the Board.

Commissioner STAKES moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner CHRISTMAN

SIX Commissioners were present and all voting “yes”. Resolution No. 3427 was approved.

6. RESOLUTION NO. 3428  
TITLE: A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE DISPOSAL OF SPECIFIC TOWNSHIP RECORDS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TOWNSHIP’S RECORD RETENTION AND DISPOSAL SCHEDULE. (ADMINISTRATION)

President WARREN read Resolution No. 3428 to the Board.

Commissioner SLONAKER moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner STAKES

President WARREN advised that the Board received a list of records and it is consistent with state Policy.

SIX Commissioners were present and all voting “yes”. Resolution No. 3428 was approved.

7. RESOLUTION NO. 3429  
TITLE: A RESOLUTION CLARIFYING OR OTHERWISE ESTABLISHING A POLICY FOR THE USE OF WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP RESOURCES FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND CIVIL IMMIGRATION MATTERS

President WARREN read Resolution No. 3429 to the Board.

Commissioner STAKES moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner WARREN

As Commissioner STAKES introduced this Resolution he made the following comments: First he acknowledged the Chief of Police and all the Officers that serve the Township as they keep this Township safe and nothing in the resolution is intended to undermine their work. The purpose of the policy is to protect our Officers, the Township and the taxpayers. It is also about clarity of roles, legal protection and responsible governance. He feels it is something the Township should be addressing as local governments routinely adopt policies that guide how municipal resources are used and how departments interact with outside agencies. The resolution does not regulate immigration policy. Immigration enforcement remains the responsibility of the federal government. The resolution states that Whitehall Township resources should not be used for voluntary federal immigration enforcement unless required by law. Commissioner STAKES noted that Chief MARKS stated that Whitehall Police do not currently have a working relationship with ICE and do not participate in the Federal 287G program. That statement reinforces the purpose of this resolution. It does not meaningfully change how the Police Department operates but what it

does do is ensures that the policy reflects that moving forwarding that future Chiefs, and Officers cannot change it without public discussion. The Chief also referenced the department's biased based policing policy. This policy addresses how officers interact with individuals. The legal issue addressed in the resolution is different. It concerns civil immigration detainers and the potential liability municipalities face when individuals are detained without judicial warrants. Also noted was that the PA State Police share information with Federal Authorities and nothing in this Resolution changes that. This addresses detention authority which is where municipalities have faced constitutional liability, even though having a policy does not eliminate all possibility of a lawsuit. However, clear policies are how governments reduce risk and demonstrate that they are acting within constitutional standards. A broader issue Commissioner STAKES noted is that two warehouse facilities near our community have been purchased and are being converted into ICE detention facilities. Development like that is what creates fear in our communities and has heard that fear from residents in Whitehall. Residents who are afraid to leave their home and parents who are worried about sending kids to school and these are people who are here legally, but still fear being detained. Commissioner SNYDER stated that the Board had a healthy debate during the Workshop Meeting regarding this issue. He went on to read a response from Chief Marks that was sent to Commissioner Christman. Chief Marks stated that he had conversation with Commissioner STAKES after the first meeting where he discussed this matter. Chief Marks finds this legislation to be unnecessary and unenforceable. As the Mayor serves as head of public safety, in our First Class Township & Home Rule Charter system of government. Chief went on to address Commissioner CHRISTMAN's question and at the end of the reply he stated, "the proper place for this debate is on a national stage and at the ballot box. It belongs there as that is how democracy deals with issues at a national level." Commissioner SNYDER noted that Chief MARKS has been a patrolman in this community for nearly 27 years with an approximate additional 10 years as Chief of Police. Commissioner SNYDER has a lot of respect for what he does and how he operates within our Township. His decision will be based on two things: 1) What he believes is happening in the community based on his own experience, and 2) the recommendation of the Chief of Police who has served this community for over 30 years. He has had frontline experience has knows the details of the situation and has greater view of the community from all social levels. Based on that information, Commissioner SNYDER will not be supporting this legislation. Commissioner STAKES commented that the Chief noted at the last budget hearings that he was initially against body cameras but came to learn he was wrong. So could he possibly be wrong about this policy as well. Commissioner SNYDER replied that he has his beliefs and he is basing his decision on the facts as he read and understood them.

Commissioner CHRISTMAN stated that he values the Chief's knowledge and experience and he stands in agreement with him.

Commissioner STAKES asked both Commissioners SNYDER & CHRISTMAN why they believe this is unenforceable as the Chief has not litigated this in court, but he knows people who have and who have in Lehigh County.

Commissioner ATIYEH commented that he commends Commissioner STAKES for being passionate about this issue and for bringing this Resolution forward. He has great respect for the leadership within the Police Department. Not only has the Chief served with the department a long time, he also leads the Chief of Police Association. He doesn't see that it is necessary at this time for the Board to be making this decision. He will not be supporting this either. He is the son of two immigrants, so a first generation American and he understands both sides of this issue.

President WARREN stated that he does not see this as against the Police. We support our Police. He is proud of the Police Department as they are well trained and have deescalation policies and things of that nature. As it was stated earlier, it goes Federal, State, County then Local. The State Police have been sued and litigated, and they created a policy as a result of that litigation on how they will handle matters where the detainer is out of their control. This policy does not prevent our Police to abate a criminal situation or responding to an act of a crime. Whether this motion passes

or fails he asks that there be a hierarchy of decision making if something like this would affect our Township. He does not want one officer to be put in that position, unless it is a life or death situation. The State Police do have a policy on how to respond on an arbitrary detainer that if we would honor, we would honor at our own risk. He would like another layer of checks and balances before we would move forward with something that does not hold up in court. In 2014, Lehigh County unanimously passed legislation which was the result of an action that was a detainer for a person and it was not substantiated by facts. It cost the County \$195,000 – 50% paid by the federal government and the remainder by the Police Department involved.

Commissioner CHRISTMAN added that he does not believe Chief Marks would put the Township nor his department at risk.

Commissioner STAKES noted that what is being proposed is a non-binding resolution directing the Mayor and the Chief of Police to create a policy.

Stephanie Falcone 3434 Lehigh Street stated that the resolution reinforces the role of trust and communication between residents, local government and law enforcement by providing clear guidance to them, they are shielded from having to make complicated decisions about civil immigration in high pressure situations. She urged the Board to consider the voices that you represent, who cannot be here today and that passing this resolution goes a long way toward cementing trust in our elected officials and in one another as neighbors and friends.

Anthony Kopeck of 3763 Dogwood Drive feels this matter should be tabled until there is a full board to vote and Chief Marks should be present as well.

Commissioner SLONAKER commented that this subject means more to someone if it individually touches you.

SIX Commissioners were present and three voting “yes” (STAKES, WARREN & SLONAKER) and three voting “no” (CHRISTMAN, SNYDER & ATIYEH). Resolution No. 3429 failed to pass.

President WARREN thanked everyone for having this discussion and having decorum while doing so.

8. RESOLUTION NO. 3430  
TITLE: A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE MAYOR AND WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP TO ENTER INTO A COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP & PARK FACILITY LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH SPORTS FACTORY OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY, LLC REGARDING THE RESERVATION OF SCHADT AVENUE PARK FOR COMMUNITY AND ATHLETIC EVENTS

President WARREN read Resolution No. 3430 to the Board.

Commissioner SNYDER moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner SLONAKER

Commissioner SNYDER advised the following: Sports Factory will not have total control, they will be allowed to place a sign and they will be providing Community Events.

President WARREN added that he attended a meeting at the park early on in this process and the Park was full of kids which was great to see. Sports Factory sponsored a National Night Out and did a great job and it was a big success.

Commissioner ATIYEH noted that he supports this group and they are doing really great things at the park and he is glad that we are not getting into a long term contract in the hopes that a parent group may step up at some point.

SIX Commissioners were present and all voting “yes”. Resolution No. 3430 was approved.

**E. OTHER**

**DISCUSSION ITEM**

1. Status of Park Usage by Outside Organizations (K. Snyder)

Commissioner SNYDER stated that in trying to move forward with the proposed recreation center, it was discussed that an evaluation of the site needs to be done and to obtain a cost for that. KCE forwarded a feasibility study estimate of approximately \$20,000. They will review the site against the zoning ordinance, utilities, management of the site, surveying, mapping, pool removal, size of the building vs. parking requirements, conceptual costs for site improvements.

There is some conflict whether to put this on the ballot as a referendum. There were a few outreaches where an overwhelmingly majority of the public expressed a lot of interest in having a recreation center. How to afford it is the next issue to address. Financing is being discussed with Deputy Mayor Meyers as well as researching available grants for this type of project.

Attorney Gross also will need to do a title search to make sure there is clear title.

A project manager will have to be brought on board to give hard core costs for such things as where the building should be placed and what the building will contain.

Deputy Mayor MEYERS advised that the first step that should be considered is having an engineering study done.

Tina Koren addressed the Board and stated that she feels that they are trying to circumvent having a referendum which she is against. She stated that the Tax Office receives complaints every day from tax payers that can't pay their bills and you have a lot of renters that don't pay taxes and will they be allowed to use the facility? She feels that senior citizens are being taxed out of their homes.

President WARREN replied that renters do pay taxes as it is part of their rent and they would also be allowed to use the facility as they would if they needed the fire department.

Commissioner SNYDER added that the people who agree that a rec center is needed are in an older age bracket. He also noted that he did research on the statement "residents are being taxed out of their homes". His research shows that in the last 4 to 5 years there were 19 homes that went to sheriff sale for not paying their mortgage and none of them went to foreclosure. There were 3 that went for non-payment of taxes and they were LLC's.

LoriAnn Fehnel of 3107 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street commented that when the survey went out only 1300 responded out of 29,000 residents, which is no where near a majority of the Township.

Joni Todesko of 424 4<sup>th</sup> Street verified that there was a referendum done previously for a recreation center and it was shot down. Commissioner SLONAKER noted that it was done 20-25 years ago. She feels that the taxpayers should make this decision not the Commissioners.

**F. REPORTS OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

Commissioner CHRISTMAN stated that he attended the Zoning Hearing Board and they are doing good work and also noted that volunteers are needed.

Commissioner STAKES announced that the EAC will be holding a clean-up on March 21<sup>st</sup> along Fullerton Avenue and volunteers are always welcome

President WARREN noted his concerns with the following: pedestrian concern with no sidewalks on Mickley Road; curb and sidewalk yearly list and W Catasauqua apron that was recently redone – should be concrete.

Commissioner ATIYEH advised that WAWA is scheduled to open Thursday with the first 100 people getting free coffee and a t-shirt!

Treasurer KOREN sent out her report to the Board.

Mayor MARX honored retiree Deb Hill of the Whitehall Police Department. Deb started as a dispatcher in June 1980. She went on to become a criminal investigation secretary and in June of 2007 she became the Police Chief's Administrative Assistant. Deb could always be counted on to be diligent, personable, dependable and conscience of the responsibility to the residents of the Township. Best wishes to you and your family Deb on your well deserved retirement!

**G. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION – Commissioner ATIYEH moved, seconded by Commissioner STAKES to adjourn the meeting at 9:18PM.