

Board of Supervisors
Lower Makefield Township

March 7, 2022

re: Use of Excess Sewer Funds to Improve the Township and Its Environment

Dear Supervisors,

The sale of LMT's sewer system to Aqua PA for \$53 million is now a reality. At your May 5, 2021 board meeting, discussions were held on possible uses of funds from the sale of our sewer system. An interest was expressed on hearing what the community's priorities were on spending the proceeds. After paying off the sewage and golf course bonds along with other immediate expenditures, it was estimated that approximately \$18.3 million from the sale will remain.

Below are the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) suggestions on possible uses of this money that would benefit the Township's environment both today and in the future.

1. Preservation of Open Space

The permanent protection of our open space is an ideal use of the money. Permanent protection of open space provides all LMT residents both immediate and long-term environmental and financial benefits. Environmental benefits include improved water quality, improved air quality, flood mitigation, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreational opportunities. The financial benefits of protected open space include increased property values for nearby residents, lower Township taxes (fewer services needed) and lower school taxes (fewer students). The Township's 2019 Comprehensive Plan states:

Preserving open areas within the township has been a stated policy for the past 40 years. The purposes of open space preservation are the protection or increase of property values, the preservation of aspects of the natural landscape for future generations to enjoy, the enhancement of the community, and the protection of public health and safety by restricting development on environmentally sensitive lands.

The EAC believes use of these funds for open space would have broad public support. Past ballot referendums for open space funding have consistently received 70%+ voter support in Lower Makefield Township.

Since the fall of 2016, no money has been approved for the preservation of unprotected of open space. During this time there has been a great deal of land development. When combined, major projects alone approved and/or constructed in LMT since the Fall 2016 have permanently eliminated approximately **170 acres** of unprotected open space in our Township¹.

¹ South Regency of Yardley, Flowers Field at Edgewood, Yardley Woods, Caddis Health Care, Artis Senior Living, Estates at Sandy Run (St. Ignatius), Yardley Preserve/Dobry Road Erin Development, Oakmont Subdivision (Moon Nursery) and Prickett Preserve.

This represents a significant percentage of LMT's remaining developable open space identified in LMT's Comprehensive Master Plan Update 2019.

In the last several years several open space properties worthy of protection have come on the market. Unfortunately, no funds were allocated for this use and no action was taken by the Township. Action must be taken before the remainder of this land is lost to development.

2. Solar Panels

Add more solar panels to the roof of the Township Building to help address climate change and serve as an example to the community. Enough capacity should be added to provide enough electricity to power the building and the public works garage/building in the back. Although it would require an initial expenditure, in the end it would save the Township money. The EAC will provide an estimate of the Township's payback period for the cost of the solar panels if you are interested.

3. Accelerate the Basin Naturalization Program

Lower Makefield Township owns approximately eighty detention/retention stormwater control basins. The Township has conducted a basin inspection program of these basins in 2020 and 2021. These inspections evaluated the possibility of naturalizing some of the basins to improve its ability to capture pollutants and help Lower Makefield comply with its Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit requirements.

Compared to turf grass, naturalized basins remove far more pollutants and infiltrates much water which reduces local flooding and helps to replenish groundwater. They also enhance the basin's aesthetics, provide wildlife habitat, and save the Township money by significantly reducing grass mowing costs.

4. Recycling Containers for LMT's Parks

Surveys conducted by the EAC last fall found an insufficient number of recycling containers in the parks. In addition, there is no consistency in the types and colors of both trash and recycling containers in the parks which can cause confusion.

The EAC has recently been working with LMT's Park and Rec. Department to draft a *Recycling Plan* document that will describe what can be done to improve recycling at LMT's parks.

One recommendation in the *Recycling Plan* will be to purchase clearly marked combination trash/recycle containers that would have a unified look. These new containers would initially be placed at LMT's highest use parks; Macclesfield, Memorial Park/Garden of Reflection, the area surrounding the pool, and the Caiola/FredAllen ballfields. A rough estimate is that 20 combined trash/recycling containers would be needed.

5. Purchase Electric Vehicles

If new vehicles are needed by Township the purchase of electric vehicles is recommended. A quick internet search finds that many police departments in this country have started using

electric patrol vehicles with success. The lower gasoline bills, reduced maintenance costs, and reduced air pollutant emissions are among their advantages. The 2022 approved budget specifies the purchase of four police vehicles. One or more of these vehicles should be electric or hybrid.

6. Electric Vehicle Charging Station

Install either a level-2 (4-6 hour charge) or a level-3 (less than 1-hour charge) electric vehicle (EV) charging station at the Township Building. Such an action is recommended by the Lower Makefield Township Master Plan Update 2019. Specifically, one of the items in the Energy Conservation – Future Needs and Recommendations for Action is:

Alternative-fuel vehicles—Consider installing electric auto charging stations at municipal facilities and encouraging private business to install such stations.

This charging station could be used by LMT residents as well as by the Township for charging their electric vehicles.

These are the EAC's recommendations for use of the excess sewer funds. We look forward to future discussions regarding the recommendations. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

LMT EAC

c: Kurt Ferguson (Township Manager)
Jim Majewski (Director of Zoning and Planning)
Greg Hucklebridge (Public Works)
Monica Tierney (Parks and Recreation)