

58 Blue Heron Drive
Hanover, PA 17331
August 25, 2015

Board of Supervisors
Berwick Township
85 Municipal Road
Hanover, PA 17331

Gentlemen:

Some things that occurred at several recent meetings of the Board of Supervisors have raised concerns amongst citizens in attendance. The first is the incessant whispering and private conversations taking place between several supervisors, most often Chairman Foltz and Vice Chair Socks, but not limited to them. The monthly meetings of the Board are public meetings. Unless the Board adjourns for executive session, everything you say should be audible to the public. The *sotto voce* conversations imply there is business being done privately, excluding supervisors not involved in the secretive discussion, and hiding things from the public. Further, whether the supervisors holding these personal conversations are discussing Township business or whispering about anything else, they are disrespectful of their fellow elected officials and the electorate sitting in the audience.

The second concern relates to the abuse of the second Public Comments (General) portion of the announced and printed agenda. At the May meeting, Supervisor Danner used this time to read a letter from the Tax Collector and then to read his own statement. This is wrong on several counts. First, the letter from the Tax Collector, an elected official, was just that – a letter. It should have been offered during the Correspondence portion of the agenda and not during Public Comments.

Secondly, it was inappropriate for Mr. Danner to use the Public Comments portion of the meeting to read his own statement. After presenting the Tax Collector's letter during Correspondence, he could have asked for his colleagues' indulgence to read his statement at that time. However, since the Board allowed Mr. Danner to read his statement during Public Comments, he should have been asked for his name and address to conform to your new policy.

At the August meeting, Supervisor Danner again used the Public Comments (General) time to read a convoluted history of the Office Manager's cell phone, followed by a motion relating to the cell phone. This should rightly have been included under New Business, not Public Comments. And once again, Mr. Danner was not asked for his name and address, which should have occurred when you allow him to speak during Public Comment, according to your own policy.

The Public Comments portion is just that – a time for the public to speak, not a time for an elected official to speak. Supervisors have the entire rest of the meeting to speak. This was not the first time a supervisor has used Public Comments to read a personal statement. Appropriating the Public Comments portion of the meeting to pontificate an elected official's own personal views is simply inappropriate.

The Board might consider adding an item, "Elected Officials' Personal Statements," to the agenda so elected officials are not impinging on the Public Comments portion of the agenda. Further, if supervisors wish to present information not related to an agenda item and challenge a citizen, as has also happened recently, there should be an agenda item that allows for that so it does not, once again, impinge on Public Comments. This could be called, for example, "Open Discussion" and the topic should be listed on the agenda so citizens can be prepared to dialog or debate with the supervisors.

I respectfully ask that these concerns be addressed and corrected by the Board of Supervisors.

Sincerely,



Bea Haskins
Resident and Concerned Citizen