The Penn Township Board of Supervisors met on March 9, 2022, at 1:00 p.m. in the Penn Township Municipal Building, 157 East Airport Road, Butler, PA 16002 with the Chairman, Samuel M. Ward, presiding. Also present were Supervisors Douglas A. Roth and Wilbert J. Mowry, Jr.; Linda D. Zerfoss, Township Manager; Land Use Administrator, Clinton A. Bonetti; Christopher Reese, Esq., Township Solicitor; Kimberly Geyer, Butler County Commissioner; Mike Walsh and Chad Weaver, Airport Authority; Michel Pawk, Esq., Airport Authority Solicitor; and Adam Switzer, Airport Authority Engineer**.**

**Proposed Monroe Road Closure Discussion**

**Supervisor Ward read the following:**

* Several attending has had limited knowledge of the proposed closure of Monroe Road so, let’s begin by reviewing previous meetings, correspondence, and other documents which have been discussed between the Airport Authority and Penn Township.
* For several years, the Airport Manager has attended numerous Board of Supervisors meetings to discuss the Monroe Road closure to permit the proposed airport runway extension to the West.

The Airport Manager advised that all residents along Monroe Road were in favor of closing Monroe Road through traffic. Supervisor Roth asked if he had contacted the Penn Valley Athletic Club and he indicated that he was unable to contact them for their opinion.

* In 2021, at several Board of Supervisor meetings, the Aiport Manager asked for a letter of commitment agreeing to the Monroe Road closure. Penn Township advised that a Conditional Use hearing would be required to consider this request.
* On 12/13/2021, the Airport Authority, Penn Township, and Commissioner Geyer met as a follow-up to the Lope Casker letter, dated 11/22/2021, which requests the Airport Authority’s written explanation of why the abandonment of Monroe Road is necessary and (to) provide reports, analysis studies, etc. to support the decision.

At that meeting, Penn Township reviewed and commented on the Airport Consultant, WRA, report, the FAA Advisory Circular, and the PennDOT Bureau of Aviation letter, dated 1/21/2021, which the Authority had provided previously.

Penn Township also reviewed the Township Engineer, HRG, traffic report, dated 10/6/2021, which identifies a significant traffic impact caused by the proposed Monroe Road closure. This traffic impact is minimized in the WRA report. We agreed to meet with WRA and HRG engineers to discuss the differences in the traffic impact. No meeting has been scheduled at this time.

Penn Township also pointed out that the PennDOT Bureau of Aviation determined that the proposed 200’ runway extension is not cost-effective and presumably the 700’ runway extension is also not cost-effective.

Penn Township again requested the information listed above. The Authority indicated that an updated feasibility study would be available in mid-2022.

* The Airport Authority letter, dated 12/15/2021, to Penn Township stated that the request to close Monroe Road was to “permit the extension of the runway safety area located at the West end of our runway in accordance with the FFA Airport Design Advisory Circular…” and “Due to this request being at the behest of both the PennDOT Bureau of Aviation and the FAA, all costs involved in the engineering and performance of the project would be funded by those agencies.”
* The Lope Casker letter, dated 2/3/2022, to the Airport Authority stated that the Penn Township agreement to the Monroe Road closure “would be in preparation for, and a necessary condition of, the runway extension…” and “We are not in a position to make a determination about the runway extension at this time and, therefore believe it is premature to consider the vacation of Monroe Road. We believe that the issue is best considered at the same time as a conditional use hearing on the runway extension and we do not have a completed application for that request.”
* It is our understanding that Attorney Pawk and Attorney Reese had a discussion on 2/19/2022 concerning the proposed Monroe Road closure for the proposed runway extension and for the extension of the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ), whether or not a runway extension is requested. This is the first time that the RPZ expansion has alone been identified as a potential reason for the Monroe Road closure. The WRA report does not identify the proposed RPZ expansion in any of its five alternatives drawings. The extent of the expanded RPZ is unknown at this time.

The Airport Authority’s WRA report alternates summary is as follows:

* + **1 - Terminate Monroe Road with a cul-de-sac.** “Routing Impacts: Commuters currently using Monroe Road as a through-way, are required to adjust their routing to include, but are not limited to, Three Degree Road, Brownsdale Road, and Meridian Road. This alternate route results in an approximate additional 0.5 mile or less than a minute of travel, which will likely impact school bus and/or emergency vehicle travel time from the East. Eastbound vehicles destined to the Penn Valley Athletic Club (one of the most interior land uses) will have approximately 1.25 additional miles or 2 minutes of travel time due to the cul-de-sac. Approximately 70 commuters use Monroe Road as a through-way during the weekday peak hours and 40 commuters during the weekend afternoon peak hour.”

Penn Township does not agree with the WRA report conclusions. The Penn Township engineer’s, HRG, study, dated 10/6/2021 identifies the Monroe Road weekday average daily travel is 813 vehicles. The weekend average daily travel is 504 vehicles.

This study identifies the potential increase in traffic from a closed Monroe Road to adjacent roadways of 21% onto Brownsdale Road and 15% onto Beacon Road.

There would be no impact to the Butler Ambulance Service as they will use Meridian Road all the way from Butler. The larger Penn Township Volunteer Fire Department trucks will travel Three Degree Road to Brownsdale and then Brownsdale to the intersection of Meridian Road as the left turn at the end of Monroe Road cannot be navigated easily.

However, the impact on the smaller fire department and police vehicles cannot be minimized with the additional distance and travel time.

Again, Eastbound vehicles destined to the Penn Valley Athletic Club (one of the most interior land uses) will have approximately 1.25 additional miles or 2 minutes of travel time due to the Monroe Road cul-de-sac. The Penn Valley Athletic Club Board Chairman (Jon Hauser 724-324-6815) sent an email, dated 1/9/2022, which states “ The Board of PVAC has had the opportunity to meet and discuss this topic. We don’t feel that the closure of Monroe Road is in the best interests of our club. We are requesting that our Township Supervisors reject their proposed plan to close Monroe Road.”

The cost of the Alternate 1 cul-de-sac is $120,700. The least expensive alternative.

* + **2 - Relocate Monroe Road around the runway extension.** New FAA regulations do not permit traffic in the RPZ. The cost of Alternate 2 is $2,808,700.
  + **3 - Cul-de-sac Monroe Road and extend Airport Road to Meridian Road.** Reconfiguring Airport Road would need to have a 90° right turn at the end of the residences along Airport Road, (then) extend North to the boundary between the airport property and Spang Corporation, (then) turn 90° to the left, then proceed directly West to Meridian Road. This revised route is necessary to avoid vehicle traffic crossing a future taxiway that will cross an existing Cul-de-sac at the present terminus of Airport Road.

Penn Township was just made aware of this future development and anticipates that it will be shown on the updated master plan anticipated later this year.

The cost of Alternate 3 is $1,730,200.

* + **4 - Construct a tunnel beneath the runway extension.** The Airport Authority has previously advised that this is too expensive and other reasons. The cost of Alternate 4 is $22,151,100.
  + **5 - Relocate Monroe Road to Brownsdale Road.** New regulations do not permit (traffic) in the RPZ. The cost is $1,846,000.

The WRA report does not identify the proposed expansion of the RPZ in any of their alternatives.

Penn Township disagrees with this statement as the alternate route to Brownsdale, in our opinion, could be placed out of the RPZ.This alternative will mitigate the impact on the Penn Valley Athletic Club, larger fire vehicles, and the police services.

* Penn Township and the Airport Authority previously discussed that the proposed Monroe Road closure traffic impact costs, the loss of the yearly PA State Turn Back revenue for the closed portion of Monroe Road, and costs for five PA State and Penn Township road intersections, including the Route 8 at Airport Road traffic light, would be included in the airport runway extension project cost.

We believe that the Airport Authority was receptive to this and they ask Penn Township to include this in their Conditional Use requirements.

* Penn Township is aware that a developer has purchased 132 acres in Penn Township and 186 acres in Eastern Forward Township. These are the Dixon and White farms which could support approximately 100 homes in Penn Township and as many as 500+ homes in Forward Township. This assumes one home per acre in Penn Township and three homes per acre in Forward Township.
* Middlesex Township has two large developments proceeding in the Northwest portion of their Township. We are not aware of how many homes are planned in these developments.
* How does Penn Township support the traffic impact costs for developments in Middlesex and Forward Townships? We must approach these Townships to develop a plan.
* The Penn Township Impact fee from this development would potentially provide 100 units x $1,500/unit = $150,000. This is not a lot of money when it comes to improving intersections.
* What are the potential Traffic Impact fees for future development at the Airport?
  + Penn Township needs the Airport Authority and Butler County to support the Route 8 at Airport Road traffic light replacement. We previously jointly agreed to provide the 30% local share for the last grant application which was not awarded. We will continue to look for grants.
  + A traffic light at Route 8 and Brownsdale Road may also be required. How would these costs be handled?
  + An updated airport Master Plan is needed to better understand the airport’s future development. When the runway was previously extended almost twenty years ago, Penn Township was advised that there would be no more runway extensions.

This proposed runway extension, expanded RPZ, and future developments will greatly impact this rural community, its roads, and intersections.

* + Penn Township will not consider the Monroe Road closure without the Airport Authority’s formal request, an updated Master Plan, a plan that addresses how traffic and other impact costs are funded, and necessary documents submitted for a Conditional Use Hearing.

Supervisor Ward stated that taking notes in a round table discussion is difficult and suggested that participants provide feedback in their own words to get a clear record of the discussion.

Authority member Walsh stated that the Airport Authority wants to extend the runway by 200 feet and extend the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ).

Supervisor Roth asked if the existing light towers at the end of the runway would have to be moved. Authority Engineer Switzer stated that the light towers would be partially buried in the added earth fill.

Supervisor Roth asked if the FAA does not allow roads in the RPZ. Authority Engineer Switzer confirmed that existing roads are permitted, however, new roads are no longer permitted in the RPZ. The width of the RPZ is 150 feet at the end of the runway, 75 feet in each direction. With the earth fill on the South side, the width would be approximately 300 to 350 feet.

Supervisor Ward asked why Monroe Road could not be rerouted to Brownsdale Road outside of the proposed RPZ. Supervisor Ward requested a drawing of the proposed RPZ. After the meeting, Delta Airport Consultants provided a .pdf drawing file. The 1-mile visibility RPZ is an initial condition. The larger RPZ is the ideal condition, but there is no FAA mandate to use the larger size RPZ. This drawing shows two alternate new roadways to Brownsdale Road which are not in each RPZ.

Supervisor Roth asked how the proposed runway extension would benefit the Penn Township residents. Authority Engineer Switzer stated that it would be cost-effective for the Authority and would bring jobs to the area. Commissioner Geyer stated that the runway extension would bring people to the area, see how the airport is run, and decide to bring their business near the airport. With the longer runway, the airport would double the number of employees. There are currently 30 employees and two flight schools.

Supervisor Mowry referred to the previous runway extension and stated that it was a 20-year plan. At that time, Penn Township was advised that there would be no more runway extensions.

Supervisor Roth stated that the Three Degree and Brownsdale Roads intersection has had numerous accidents. PennDOT has advised that they would not permit a four-way stop sign because of the sight distance. The Brownsdale Road and Route 8 intersection is also dangerous and would need a traffic light. Commissioner Geyer agreed with these safety issues.

Supervisor Roth stated that the Airport Manager, Richard Kelly (now retired), advised that all residents along Monroe Road were in favor of closing Monroe Road to through traffic. Supervisor Roth also asked the Aiport Manger if he had contacted the Penn Valley Athletic Club (PVAC). The Airport Manager advised that he had not been able to contact PVAC for their position on closing Monroe Road. Supervisor Roth stated that a resident asked if there could be a walking trail around the end of the runway and they were told that it would not be permitted.

Solicitor Reeseasked questions that helped clarify that the Airport Authority’s first goal is to expand the safety zone and they are not yet asking for the airport runway extension.  The Airport Authority representatives estimated that extending the safety zone might take five years.  Solicitor Reese commented that if there was a request for the closure of Monroe Road without assurances that funding would be available for the safety zone extension, it might be difficult for the Supervisors to approve the Monroe Road closure. They would not want the road to close and then have the safety zone extension fail to be funded and completed. The Airport Authority representatives stated that they would look into ways that this concern might be addressed.  Solicitor Reese also noted that it’s not surprising that residents on a busy road might be eager to have the road closed so that they would have less traffic in front of their houses.  The real beneficiaries of most roads are the non-residents of the street that use it as a throughway. Authority member Walsh stated that he would check to see if this could be put in writing.

Manager Zerfoss asked what is the plan to extend the runway and RPZ Authority member Walsh stated that the Authority wants to eliminate the wall at the end of the runway, extend the fill 300 feet, and add 201 feet of runway in the immediate future. The control building will move, the small creek will be enclosed in a box culvert, and the gas line will be moved. The fill slope will be 3:1 and extend 600 to 700 feet past the end of the runway. The FAA does not allow new roads in the RPZ. Authority Engineer Switzer stated that the RPZ would extend 300 to 350 feet to the South of the runway.

Supervisor Roth asked how far the light tower was from the cemetery. Authority Engineer Switzer stated that it was approximately 300 feet.

Supervisor Roth asked what would be the economic benefits to Penn Township residents if the runway is extended. The economic benefit of airport aviation, airport development, and tax revenue. Commissioner Geyer stated that visitors would spend dollars here.

Land Use Administrator Bonetti stated that Airport Road could be extended to Meridian Road along the North airport property line (WRA Alternate 3), however, the Airport Authority does not want to do the alternate at this time.

Authority member Weaver stated that he had no preconceived notions and hoped that we can work together.

Airport Attorney Pawk thanked all for setting up the meeting and stated that the prior Conditional Use hearing for the 550 feet runway extension (to 4,801 feet), twenty years ago, previously looked at closing Monroe Road.

Commissioner Geyer expressed Butler County’s willingness to work with Penn Township. Commissioner Geyer also stated that the airport classification will not change (to allow larger aircraft) and that the FAA is forcing the Airport Authority to request the Monroe Road closure. This is one of the five (PennDOT letter dated 1/21/2021) conditions. Other conditions are secondary to the Monroe Road closure. The Airport Authority will meet on March 10th and will discuss the information presented at this meeting.

Supervisor Roth thanked the Airport Authority for allowing the annual PTVFD car show at the airport and the Wings of War events. Supervisor Roth would like to see the proposed observation deck at the administration building.

Supervisor Roth stated that he is working with the Audubon Society to develop bike and walking trails from the Audubon to the airport and the Harcrest Park.

Supervisor Roth stated that several homes were torn down on the East side of the airport, but one person built a new home in the RPZ. He did not sell the property to the airport because he likes planes and his home was already ordered.

Supervisor Roth stated he would like to have the PTVFD relocated to the airport property. Supervisor Mowry stated that there was a plan to move the PTVFD to the lot beside the church, however, there was not enough area for these facilities at that location.

In conclusion, the Airport Authority requested a list of Conditional Use Hearing documents.

After the meeting, Penn Township provided requirements for an application for Conditional Use. These requirements are on the Penn Township website as follows:

<https://penntownship.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Conditional-Use-Application.pdf>

This is the Zoning Ordinance 166.  <https://penntownship.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Zoning_Ordinance_166.pdf>

The actual criteria are listed in Chapter 18 of Ordinance 166, Section 18.26. It refers to Chapter 11 of the Penn Township Overlay Zone.

**Post-meeting note:** Although participants in this meeting were given the opportunity to provide comments to be included in the meeting minutes, the minutes are not attempting to indicate agreement by all parties as to all of the summaries of what was said at the meeting nor are the minutes indicating an agreement by all parties as to the accuracy of the underlying facts that are mentioned below.

**Adjournment**

Supervisor Ward made a motion and Supervisor Mowry seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:35 p.m.

Approved: Respectfully Submitted:

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Samuel M. Ward Linda D. Zerfoss

Chairman Manager

Board of Supervisors Penn Township