

Pike Township Board Meeting Minutes

September 16, 2025

1. Opening

- Chair **Claudette Peterson** called the meeting to order.
- Sign-in sheet was available for public comments related to the agenda.
- Peterson clarified confusion about the August meeting:
 - August meeting was **canceled** because the CIP plan was not delivered on time.
 - The **CIP was promised by August 1** but not received until **September 5**.
 - Cancellation aimed to **save taxpayer dollars**—no reason to meet without the plan.
 - Some confusion occurred as the Trustee's office contacted board members individually about the canceled meeting.

2. Purpose of the Meeting

- The main purpose was to:
 - Review and discuss the **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**.
 - Hold a **public hearing**.
 - Prepare to **vote** on approving the plan to meet the **state deadline of September 30**.

3. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Overview

Presented by: Beth Marsh

Key Points:

- **Required by Law:** House Bill 1461 (2024 session) mandates all townships to submit a 3-year CIP to the Indiana Department of Local Government and Finance (DLGF).
- **DLGF Delays:** The DLGF provided multiple late and revised templates (7 revisions), causing statewide delays.
- **No Funds in Jeopardy:** Pike Township will not lose funds as long as the plan is approved before the state deadline.

- **Nature of the Plan:**

- It's a **living document** that can change as needs shift (e.g., if a new roof becomes a higher priority than a pool).
- Must be reviewed and approved **annually**.
- Covers **unencumbered funds** (Rainy Day Fund and General Fund).

Financial Highlights:

- **Rainy Day Fund:**

- Estimated ending balance (12/31/26): **\$3,589,046**
- Committed to improvements: **\$3.6 million**
- Net after commitments: **-\$10,592 (essentially balanced)**

- **General Fund:**

- Estimated ending balance (12/31/26): **\$1,638,664**
- Committed to improvements: **\$2.9 million**
- Projected negative balance (on paper): **-\$1.26 million**
- *Note:* Negative balance just means all funds are allocated (not overspent).

Planned Uses of Funds:

- **Fire Department Needs:**

- Ambulances, radios, vehicle purchases, ladder trucks, and station improvements.

- **Township Projects:**

- Government Center renovations and infrastructure improvements.

Funding Sources:

- Township does **not collect property taxes** for general operations.
- Revenue mainly from **Local Income Tax (LIT)** and **other local revenues**.
- **Potential Issue in 2028:** LIT may be eliminated under Senate Bill 1 unless legislation changes.

4. Public Comments on the CIP

Speakers & Key Remarks:

- **Pat Magnuson:** Hoped for a productive, collaborative meeting.
- **Senator Greg Taylor:**
 - Explained **House Bill 1461** in simple terms.
 - Emphasized the importance of allocating all funds to avoid the state classifying them as “excess” and redirecting them to road projects.
 - Clarified that **any infrastructure funds must stay in Pike Township.**
 - Warned about potential **LIT funding loss in 2028**, encouraged planning for alternatives.
 - Offered to work on legislative fixes.
- **Teresa Perry:**
 - Thanked firefighters for service.
 - Raised concern about **road damage**—shared personal experience with vehicle damage.
 - Urged attention to **road repair needs**.

5. Transition to Budget Hearing

- CIP public hearing **closed**, and the **Township Budget hearing opened**.

6. Budget Overview (Presented by Beth Marsh & Fire Chief)

Documents Distributed:

- Updated budget packet (with replacement pages for previously issued drafts).
- Includes executive summary and individual fund breakdowns.

Budget Figures (as published):

- **Rainy Day Fund:** \$0
- **General Fund:** \$2,724,688

- **Township Assistance:** \$1,517,400
- **Fire Fund:** \$52,520,134
- **Cumulative Fire Fund:** \$940,000
- **Total Budget Estimate:** \$57,702,222
- **Fire Levy:** \$29,018,161
- **Cumulative Fire Levy:** \$2,113,718
- **Total Levy:** \$31,131,879
- **Property Tax Caps (Circuit Breakers):** \$3,846,300 (↑40% from last year)

Budget Notes:

- General increases:
 - 5% for Township Assistance
 - 3% for operating expenses
 - 10% for utilities
 - 15% for health insurance
- Board salaries remain flat (with per-meeting pay).
- Budget adoption meeting scheduled for **October 21 at 6 PM.**

7. Discussion Highlights

- **Board Member Questions:**
 - Concern raised about how **rental and housing assistance** amounts are determined.
 - Suggestion to use **Fair Market Housing values** to better reflect current rent costs.
 - Noted increased demand for assistance (due to AES energy issues and rent inflation).
- **Chair Peterson:**
 - Pointed out the township had **excess reserves** during COVID that went unused while residents struggled.
 - Urged better use of funds for community needs.

- **Senator Taylor (again):**
 - Requested that **full proposed budgets** (not just summaries) be **posted publicly** on the township website for transparency.
 - Clarified that the law only requires the “Form 3” document but encouraged the township to go beyond the minimum for public understanding.
- **Public Comment (Paul & others):**
 - Asked if the township has increased assistance levels since 2021.
 - Trustee’s office confirmed increases of **3–5%**, but board members noted this may not match real inflation or rental costs.
 - Discussion about providing annual comparisons of assistance funding.

8. Approval of Previous Minutes

- **May 20, 2025 meeting minutes** approved (with minor revision removing “Advisory” from board title).

9. Financial Report (Current Year-to-Date)

- Township is **58% through the budget year** and remains **within limits** across all categories:
 - **Township General Fund:** 37% spent
 - **Small Claims Court:** 47% spent
 - **Township Assistance:** 42% spent
 - **Direct Assistance:** Below 20% in most areas (e.g., 15% for medical/burial)

11. Financial Spending Update (Mid-Year Review)

Township Assistance Spending (Year-to-Date)

Reported by: Beth Marsh

Category	Budget	Spent	% of Budget Used
Hospital	\$11,000	\$0	0%
Burials	\$39,425	\$7,885	20%
Household Supplies	\$10,000	\$630	6%

Clothing	N/A	\$299	2%
Shelter Assistance	\$276,000	\$168,261	61%
Public Utilities	\$80,000	\$40,522	51%
Baby Assistance	N/A	\$391	<1%

→ **Total Direct Relief Spending:** ~51% of total Township Assistance budget used. [1] →

Additional Appropriation Planned: To increase funding for **shelter assistance** next month due to high community demand.

Fire Department Spending (Year-to-Date)

Category	% of Budget Spent
Personal Services	52%
Supplies	53%
Services	49%
Capital Outlays	4%
Overall Fire Budget	41% spent
Cumulative Fire Fund	14% spent

→ **Total Township Budget:** Only 39% spent to date — indicating **healthy financial status** and no overspending concerns. [1] → All departments remain **within approved budget limits**.

12. Board Discussion: Financial Transparency and Public Access

Board Member Perkins noted the amount of numbers shared and expressed concern that taxpayers may not fully understand the budget without clear explanations.

“These are a lot of numbers. As a taxpayer myself, I agree these should be uploaded so the public can see what’s going on — even if they need to run it through ChatGPT to explain it.”

Motion Proposed

- Perkins moved that **all budget and financial documents** (even if 500 pages) be **scanned, zipped, and uploaded** to the Pike Township website for public access.
- Several members agreed with the spirit of transparency.

Legal Clarification

Attorney Jeff:

- The Township Board **cannot enforce** uploading documents; that authority lies **solely with the Trustee’s office** (executive branch).

- The Board **can formally request** but not mandate it.

Trustee Annette Johnson's Response

- Confirmed she would **consult the Indiana Township Association (ITA)** regarding proper procedures and what other townships do.
- Emphasized that **Pike's website already includes prior years' budgets and meeting information.**
- Stated willingness to explore options for uploading current-year documents but wanted to ensure **legal compliance** first.
- Asserted she has **not withheld any information** and distributed it as soon as she received it from state offices.

Public Comments on Transparency

Resident Robin addressed the board:

- Confirmed that the **budget is public record** and accessible via the **Indiana Gateway portal**.
- Stated that residents can also **submit a written request** to the Trustee's office to receive detailed budget information.
- Trustee must respond within **10 business days**, per Indiana public access law.

Board Clarification:

- Agreed that if digital uploads are not possible, the Trustee's office should **make printed copies available** for pickup.
- **Chair Peterson** emphasized the importance of providing **clear, understandable summaries** for the public.

“We need to do a better job making sure people understand what we’re doing and why we’re doing it. Whether they agree or not, they deserve clarity.”

Outcome:

- **Motion withdrawn** after clarification that the Board cannot legally enforce the upload.
- **Consensus:** Strong desire for greater transparency; Trustee will review with ITA and report back.

13. Budget Explanation (Clarifications by Beth Marsh)

Beth explained **key financial terms** for public understanding:

- **Personal Services:** Payroll, retirement, and insurance for staff.
- **Supplies:** Office materials, maintenance supplies, printing, etc.
- **Services & Charges:** Utilities, professional fees, travel, repairs, cemetery care, dues, and subscriptions.
- **Capital Outlays:** Major purchases like buildings, equipment, or infrastructure.

Additional Clarification:

- AFR (Annual Financial Report) lists **all transactions and payees** by category.
- Data on **how many people were helped** by each assistance type comes from a **different report** (TA-7 Form), managed by the **Township Assistance Department**.

Prescription Drug Assistance:

- \$11,000 budgeted; **no spending to date** (residents must request this assistance to receive it).
- Members noted that residents may be **unaware** the program exists and called for **better outreach**.

14. Establishment of New Fund (Fund 50 – Road & Infrastructure)

Presenter: Attorney Jeff / Beth Marsh

Purpose

- **Fund 50** formally creates an account for **road and infrastructure projects**, as required by the **new state law** connected to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
- **No money will be placed in the fund initially.**
- The creation is **purely an accounting compliance step** — establishing a placeholder for **potential future excess funds**.

How It Works

- Fund 50 will **receive future excess dollars** (up to 30%) from the **General Fund or Rainy Day Fund**, if available after other obligations.
- **Once deposited, funds cannot be withdrawn** for non-road uses.
- Any project using these funds must be **approved by the Board** and **limited to Pike Township roads**.

Clarification:

- This is **not new spending**, only a **bookkeeping setup** to comply with state reporting requirements.

15. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Project Breakdown

Planned Projects (Through FY 2026)

Category	Description	Notes
Ambulance Purchase	\$420,000	For one new ambulance
Staff Vehicles	\$329,000	For admin, battalion, and duty officer vehicles
Station Improvements	\$50,000–\$70,000	Concrete, bay, and facility repairs (multiple stations)
Equipment Purchases	N/A	Firefighting and safety gear
Ladder Truck Purchase	N/A	For fleet replacement cycle
Ambulance Remount	N/A	Rechassis of older units
Radio Replacement	N/A	Communication upgrades
Government Center Improvements	N/A	Renovations and new construction for township operations

Vehicle Replacement Schedule:

- **Ladder trucks:** 10–12 years
- **Ambulances:** 4 years (then remount every 3 years)
- **Staff vehicles:** ~5 years (reviewed annually)

Board Discussion:

- Chair Peterson requested **data on vehicle age, usage, and condition** before approving future purchases.
- Chief explained vehicles are replaced as part of a **planned lifecycle**, not as emergency replacements.
- Board requested documentation on **vehicle expenses and wear data** (to be shared by next meeting).

16. Environmental Concerns – New Fire Station Site (Station 63)

Chair Peterson:

- Raised concern over **potential environmental contamination** at the proposed property for **Station 63 construction**.

- Requested documentation of any **Phase I environmental study** and results.

Fire Chief Response:

- A **Phase I Environmental Study** was completed in **Spring 2023**.
- Found a **minor concern** in one corner of the property, but **consultants determined it was manageable** with standard remediation.
- Will provide written documentation and vendor information at a later date.
- No further studies will be commissioned **until board authorization** for land purchase is granted.

18. Fund 50 Resolution

- **Motion:** To create/approve the Fund 50 Resolution.
- **Action:** Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

19. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Discussion

Overview

- The CIP plan must be approved **before September 30** to meet state deadlines.
- The plan outlines **projected spending** for upcoming years but **does not authorize immediate purchases**.
- Officials clarified that the CIP is a **planning document, not a spending commitment**, and can be revised later.

Concerns Raised

- **Member Peterson** expressed concerns about:
 - Vehicle purchases listed in the 2026 projections.
 - The need for more transparency and time to review large financial decisions.
 - Ensuring Pike Township contributes to road infrastructure (e.g., Guion Road).
- **Clerk/Accountant Response:**
 - Explained that advertising and publication deadlines limit flexibility.

- Emphasized that **failure to pass the plan on time could jeopardize budget approval** by the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF).

- **Trustee and Staff Clarifications:**

- Compared the situation to other townships (e.g., Warren Township) but emphasized that Pike has a **fire department**, creating different budget demands and deadlines.
- Trustee defended her team's timeline, citing **state-imposed time constraints** and **Senate Bill 1** implementation delays.

20. Broader Budget Process Issues

- Several members noted frustration with **receiving budget materials late**, limiting their ability to review.
- Calls were made for:
 - **Earlier delivery** of budget documents (30–45 days in advance).
 - **Improved communication and work sessions** between meetings.
 - **Alternative advertisement options** beyond newspapers (though state law currently restricts this).

21. Legal and Legislative Input

Attorney Bellamy

- Warned against altering the advertised plan too much, as doing so could **invalidate state approval**.
- Recommended adopting the plan **as presented** to stay compliant, then revisiting details later.

Senator Taylor

- Confirmed that **House Bill 1461 and Senate Bill 1** caused state-level delays.
- Urged cooperation, transparency, and timely planning to avoid state intervention or control.
- Emphasized that failure to act could risk **loss of autonomy** over Pike Township's fire department.
- Recommended approving the plan now and refining later with public transparency.

22. Public Comment

Cynthia Scarbro (Resident)

- Questioned the use of the word “*plan*” versus “*projection*.”
- Requested more **data analytics and comparisons from prior years** to understand projections.
- Encouraged the township to use best practices and collaborative work sessions outside of formal meetings.

Response:

- Staff explained that the plan functions like a projected budget — flexible and revisable.
- Clarified that large projects, such as station construction, still require future board approval.

23. Motions and Amendments

Amendment 1

- **Motion:** Remove **station construction** line items from:
 - **2026 (\$10 million)**
 - **2029 (\$6 million)**
- **Result:** Motion passed.

Amendment 2

- **Motion:** Remove **staff vehicle purchase** from:
 - **2026 (\$329,000)**
- **Result:** Motion passed (4–2).

Final Action

- **Motion:** Approve the **CIP Plan as amended** (removing both construction and vehicle line items).
- **Result:** Passed unanimously (5–0).
- **Note:** This will create a **positive fund balance**.

24. Closing Comments

Trustee Johnson

- Voiced concern that removing vehicle and construction funds could jeopardize firefighter safety and readiness.
- Stressed that **infrastructure funding** should come from the **City of Indianapolis**, not the township's fire budget.

Board Member Perkins

- Responded that the board's actions were **not cutting essential fire services**, only postponing questionable expenditures pending environmental and fiscal review.
- Emphasized commitment to firefighters and taxpayer accountability.

Final Consensus

- CIP plan approved with amendments.
- Budget discussions postponed until next meeting (before November deadline).
- Agreement on need for:
 - Better communication.
 - Transparency on project justifications.
 - Earlier access to financial materials.

Key Decisions Summary

Item	Motion	Outcome
Fund 50 Resolution	Approve/Create	Passed
CIP Plan 2026–2029	Approve (with amendments)	Passed
Remove Station Construction (\$10M & \$6M)	Amendment	Passed
Remove Staff Vehicle Purchase (\$329K)	Amendment	Passed
Approve CIP Plan as Amended	Final Approval	Passed (5–0)

Ashley N. Hogue

Secretary of the Board

Attested By: