

**Eldred Township Supervisors**

**SPECIAL MEETING**

February 14, 2023

This meeting was held at the Eldred Township Building.

Call to order at 4:24 PM by Chairman Greeley.

The meeting was opened with a salute to the flag.

Roll Call: Supervisors John MacBeth, Lawrence Ross and Gordon Greeley were in attendance.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:** No one in attendance.

**SUBJECT OF MEETING:** Discussion between Eldred Township Supervisors and Barnett Township (Jefferson County) Supervisors about a possible merger

Chairman Greeley asked for a roll call of the Barnett Township (Jefferson County) Supervisors in attendance at the meeting. Barnett Township Supervisors Paul Ross and Nancy Boyer were present. Supervisor Ed Shields was absent.

The Barnett Township (Jefferson County) Supervisors present at the meeting said that due to the low population of the township, they have a hard time getting residents to run for offices. The township currently has no Auditors.

Terri Cunkle, the Local Government Policy Specialist from the PA Department of Community & Economic Development, attended the meeting to give the Supervisors information about a merger process. Ms. Cunkle said that if the Supervisors from both townships agree to the possibility of a merger, then the voters in each township ultimately decide whether or not the townships will merge. She said that once the Supervisors agree, then there is a process and a timeframe to follow to get a referendum question on the ballot. A majority of voters from both townships must vote to approve the merger for it to happen, and if the voters don't approve, then the townships will have to wait five years before they can put another referendum on the ballot.

Ms. Cunkle said that public education is key to the process, and the Supervisors need to have joint public meetings to discuss the possible merger and the ways it may affect the residents of each township. She brought some basic information about each township. She said that the information is available in the public domain:

- Government Type: Both are a Second-Class Township
- 2020 Census Population: Barnett Township 186, and Eldred Township 1,324
- Real Estate Tax Rate: Barnett Township = 3.85 mills total, and Eldred Township = 3.6 mills total
- Road Mileage: Barnett Township 7.72 miles, and Eldred 48.78 miles
- Fire Department: Both have Sigel Volunteer Fire Department

The procedure for getting the referendum on the ballot:

1. Supervisors from both townships agree to a potential merger
2. Resolution for both townships that the Supervisors of both townships agree to a potential merger and intend to have a joint public meeting to discuss a possible merger and get public input (Resolution for both townships must match)
3. Draft Ordinance for both townships to have a referendum put on the ballot for each township (Ordinances for both townships must match)
4. Draft Ordinance goes to legal counsel for inspection.
5. Ordinance advertised for public inspection
6. Ordinance presented at a regular meeting for vote
7. Ordinance submitted to the County Courthouse not later than August 8, 2023 for inclusion on the general election ballot this year
8. Referendum Question placed on November 7, 2023 general election ballot for the voters of each township to decide whether or not they would like the townships to merge (majority vote in one township decides for that township – both townships must have a majority vote in favor of the merger, in order to move forward)

Ms. Cunkle said that if the merger is approved by a majority vote in each township, then a transition document will need to be created. The transition document will define a timeframe and procedure for things such as unexpired terms of elected officials, the close of finances for Barnett Township, the integration of finances for the merged township, mapping of the new boundaries, the transition of records, etc.

Supervisor MacBeth asked what happens with tax collection, and whether or not there would be two Tax Collectors. Ms. Cunkle said that the transition document will define things like that, and it can legally take up to five years to integrate two townships if elected officials want to finish their terms. She said that if the Barnett Township Tax Collector wants to continue, then she would finish her term and then turn over the records.

Supervisor MacBeth then asked what would happen if Eldred Township has Ordinances that Barnett Township does not and vice versa. Ms. Cunkle said that since Barnett Township will no longer exist if the merger is approved, Eldred Township's Ordinances will be codified for everyone to follow.

Ms. Cunkle suggested that the Supervisors from both townships talk to the Fire Chief about using the Fire Hall for the public meeting. She also said that the state sets aside money to help with mergers and offers "stamp grants," which help pay for legal fees and mapping. The grant requires a 10% match from the municipality.

Chairman Greeley adjourned the meeting at 5:46 PM.

The next regular meeting will be held at the Eldred Township Building on March 8, 2023 at 4:30 pm.

Lisa Kelso  
Secretary