

**New Sewickley Township  
Beaver County, Pennsylvania**

**Resolution No. 17-24**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE  
TOWNSHIP OF NEW SEWICKLEY, COUNTY OF BEAVER,  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, AUTHORIZING  
CEREMONIAL INVOCATIONS PRIOR TO OFFICIAL POLICYMAKING  
AND LEGISLATIVE FUNCTIONS AND ADOPTING A POLICY OF NON-  
EXCLUSIONARY SELECTION OF VOLUNTEER INVOCATION  
SPEAKERS.**

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors of New Sewickley Township desires to preserve and maintain the long tradition of solemnizing its proceedings by allowing and inviting a ceremonial invocation before each regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township of New Sewickley recognizes that our Nation's history is replete with official references to the value of ceremonial invocations; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States Supreme Court and the courts of this Commonwealth have consistently upheld the practice of delivering ceremonial invocations before governmental bodies prior to policymaking; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township of New Sewickley recognizes and celebrates that our Township, Commonwealth, and Nation are comprised of individuals with a wide diversity of viewpoints, including without limitation religions, faiths, beliefs, non-beliefs, and ideas; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township of New Sewickley desires to incorporate all religions, faiths, beliefs, non-beliefs, ideas, and viewpoints in solemnizing its proceedings by way of ceremonial invocation; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township of New Sewickley shall make reasonable and continuing efforts to invite, locate, and welcome individuals with a diversity of religions, faiths, beliefs, non-beliefs, ideas, and viewpoints to offer the ceremonial invocation; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township of New Sewickley's policies shall not be intended, implemented, or construed in any manner to affiliate the Board of Supervisors or the Township of New Sewickley with, or express any preference toward or against any religions, faiths, beliefs, non-beliefs, ideas, or viewpoints; and

**WHEREAS**, in recognition and appreciation of the wealth of diverse religions, faiths, beliefs, non-beliefs, ideas, and viewpoints within our community, it is the policy of the Township of New Sewickley that ceremonial invocations shall be allowed where such invocations are solemn and respectful in tone with the purpose of encouraging the Board of Supervisors to recognize the weight of their responsibilities and reflect upon shared civic values and ideals before embarking on its business of governing; and

**WHEREAS**, invocation speakers are requested to refrain from exploiting the ceremonial invocation as a means to proselytize or advance any one belief or viewpoint, disparaging any other belief or viewpoint; denigrating believers or nonbelievers, offering salvation, threatening damnation, or preaching conversion in any form; and

**WHEREAS**, in further recognition and appreciation of the wealth of diverse religions, faiths, beliefs, non-beliefs, ideas, and viewpoints held by persons within this community, it is the policy of the Township of New Sewickley that all opening invocations be purely voluntary to allow participation or non-participation by all persons in attendance; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors intends that these policies and procedures do not proselytize or advance any religions, faiths, beliefs, non-beliefs, ideas, and viewpoints, or otherwise show any preference toward one viewpoint to the exclusion of others.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of Supervisors of the Township of New Sewickley, County of Beaver, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as follows:

## **SECTION 1. INVOCATION PROCEDURE AND POLICIES.**

**Intent.** It is the intent of the Board of Supervisors of the Township of New Sewickley to formulate a policy for ceremonial opening invocations that is consistent with the United States Supreme Court's ruling in *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, 572 U.S. 565 (2014). The policies and procedures set forth herein are not intended, nor shall they be implemented, construed, or understood, in any way, to affiliate the Board of Supervisors or the Township of New Sewickley with any religion, faith, belief, non-belief, idea, or viewpoint, nor to express a preference for or against any religion, faith, belief, non-belief, idea, or viewpoint.

The intent of the policies and procedures set forth herein are intended to acknowledge and express the Township of New Sewickley's respect for the diversity of religions, faiths, beliefs, non-beliefs, ideas, and viewpoints that exists within our community, and to express the Board of Supervisors' respect for the importance of the civic, governmental, and legislative functions it serves.

Although all persons in attendance are welcome to participate to the extent deem fit, at no time shall any person be required to participate or remain for the duration of a ceremonial invocation.

**Invocation Speaker Selection.** The invocation speaker shall be selected in accordance with the procedure set forth herein.

The Township of New Sewickley hereby invites and welcomes leaders of all religions, faiths, beliefs, non-beliefs, ideas, and viewpoints to participate as a volunteer in offering ceremonial opening invocations prior to regular meetings of the Board of Supervisors.

Invocation speakers selected to offer a ceremonial invocation shall not receive any form of compensation for their voluntary services. The local volunteer selected for offering the ceremonial invocation shall be selected from a wide pool of leaders as follows:

1. The Board of Supervisors shall compile and maintain a database of known religious, non-religious, sectarian, and non-sectarian congregations, organizations, and groups with an established presence within the Township of New Sewickley. In compiling and maintaining such a database, the Board of Supervisors shall take reasonable steps to include all religions, faiths, beliefs, non-beliefs, ideas, and viewpoints known to have an established presence within the Township of New Sewickley. Any congregation, organization, group, or person who wishes to be included in the database may request inclusion by submitting a written request to the Board of Supervisors. This policy is intended to be and shall be applied in a manner that is maximally inclusive of all religions, faiths, beliefs, non-beliefs, ideas, and viewpoints that are practiced within the Township. The Board of Supervisors shall exercise its best reasonable efforts to update the database on an annual basis.
2. One speaker shall be selected for each regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors from the database on a randomized rotating basis such that all congregations, organizations, groups, and persons in the database are provided an equal opportunity to participate. Speakers selected shall be invited by the Board of Supervisors to attend a scheduled regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors and offer a ceremonial invocation prior to the meeting. No invocation speaker shall be scheduled to offer an invocation at consecutive meetings of the Board of Supervisors, and no invocation speaker shall be scheduled to offer an invocation more than two (2) regular meetings within any twelve (12) month period.
3. The Board of Supervisors and the Township of New Sewickley shall not engage in any prior review or involvement of the content of any invocation to be offered by an invocation speaker. Invocation speakers are hereby reminded that the

subject and tone of the ceremonial invocation shall be respectful of the civic purpose that is to be served: to focus the attention of the Board of Supervisors on the gravity and importance of the work it is about to perform. No speaker shall proselytize or advance any one belief or viewpoint, disparage any other belief or viewpoint; denigrate believers or nonbelievers, offer salvation, threaten damnation, or preach conversion in any form.

4. In the event no invocation speakers listed within the database are available to provide the ceremonial invocation for a regular meeting, the Board of Supervisors may invite a speaker not included in the database to offer the ceremonial invocation or forgo the ceremonial invocation for that meeting.
5. At no time shall a member of the Board of Supervisors be permitted to offer the ceremonial invocation.

**Conduct of Proceedings.** No person in attendance shall be required to participate in any ceremonial invocation that is offered. An opportunity to exit the room for the offering of the invocation and return upon its completion shall be afforded to all persons in attendance.

Persons in attendance shall be invited to stand during the ceremonial invocation, but at no time shall such an invitation be intended, or construed as a demand, request, order, or command to participate in any form. Any invitation to stand constitutes a general invitation that a person in attendance may stand or participate to the extent that person wishes. At no time shall any person in attendance be required to stand for the ceremonial invocation or otherwise participate in the ceremonial invocation.

**Agenda.** At all meetings where an invocation speaker will be offering a ceremonial invocation, an item entitled "Invocation" shall be added to the agenda, listing the speaker's name and affiliation, if any. This agenda item shall be listed prior to any official business of the Board of Supervisors. Notwithstanding the preceding, such information shall not be considered or construed as an official agenda item for the public meeting nor considered part of the public business to be transacted by the Board of Supervisors.

The following disclaimer shall be placed at the bottom of all agendas for regular meetings of the Board of Supervisors:

*The purpose of the ceremonial opening invocation is to focus the attention of the Board of Supervisors upon the gravity and importance of the civic responsibilities and duties it performs. Any invocation offered prior to a meeting of the Board of Supervisors is the voluntary offering of a private person. The views and beliefs expressed by the invocation speaker have not been previously reviewed or approved by the Board of Supervisors or Township staff. The Township does not endorse,*

*support, or otherwise promote any religion, faith, belief, non-belief, idea, or viewpoint espoused by any speaker.*

*Persons in attendance are invited to stand during the ceremonial invocation; however, such invitation shall not be construed as a demand, request, order, or command to stand or otherwise participate in the invocation in any way. Participation in the invocation is purely voluntary. No person in attendance is required to stand, participate, or remain in the room for the invocation. Any person may remain seated or exit the room for the duration of the invocation.*

**ADOPTED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.**

**ATTEST:**

**NEW SEWICKLEY TOWNSHIP  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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**Secretary**

**Chairman**