

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
Friday, November 18, 2011, 1 PM**

**MINUTES**

**OPENING; ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Mach. Those present were Mayor Mach, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lascari and Mr. Seal. Also present was Clerk Pizzaia.

The **FLAG SALUTE** was conducted.

**SUNSHINE STATEMENT**

Mayor Mach read the following statement: Notice of this Special Meeting has been sent to two official newspapers of Blairstown Township noting the date, time and agenda thereof in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

**DISCUSSION OF FLOODING ISSUES**

Mayor Mach asked Jean O'Brien to come forward since she had requested this meeting. Mrs. O'Brien said that she has done research on the flooding problem and has come to the conclusion that the NJ State owned property known as Cedar Lake Horse Farm is a major contributor to the flooding issue. There is a stone wall on the property that she believes is causing the flooding. She introduced Frank Hennion of the Division of Parks and Forestry, who will be presenting the problem to his superiors in the State. Mr. Hennion reports to Steve Ellis, who reports to John Trontis. Mr. Trontis is the Asst. Director of Parks for the State of NJ.

Mr. Hennion said that he will walk the property on Monday, November 21<sup>st</sup> and look at the rock wall in question. He will take pictures and discuss his findings with his superiors. Livia Angelone, Bridge Street, said that the rock is in place around the old race track. The rocks push the flood waters towards the village area when heavy rains are present and cause the severe flooding. Ms. Angelone said that a greater water retention area is needed because of the flood water.

Mayor Mach said that Mrs. O'Brien has provided the Committee with good contacts. The question is where to go from here. Mr. Hennion said that he will look at the rock wall and will hopefully be able to make arrangements to have the wall removed. He said that the State has manpower and budget problems just like the municipalities.

Mayor Mach talked about information he received at the League of Municipalities recently. He said that a "Blue Acres" Program may be available, whereby the municipality buys affected flood properties with Open Space monies. This is only at the proposal stage at the State level.

Mrs. O'Brien asked about silt removal and desnagging. Mr. Lance said that silt removal was done in recent years. Mayor Mach said that the Warren County Mosquito Commission desnagged the river a couple of years ago and he believes that it is scheduled again next year.

Mayor Mach and the rest of the Committee thanked Mrs. O'Brien and Mr. Hennion for attending the meeting. He asked Mr. Hennion to remain in contact with the Clerk regarding any developments in his findings.

Rosalie Murray, Heller Hill Road, asked if there was a manual of procedures to be followed in the case of emergencies. Robert DePuy, Assistant OEM Director, said that there is.

Ms. Angelone said that when Bridge Street was repaved, new storm drain pipes and basins were supposed to be installed. She said that this work was not done. Mayor Mach said that she should contact David Hicks' office since Bridge Street belongs to the County.

### **BUDGET WORK SESSION**

Barbara Emery, CFO, came forward to discuss the budget for 2012. With regard to the individual line items, Ms. Emery said that legal expenses and fuel are two accounts that will need more monies added.

Mrs. Emery said that the budgets were tight this year and most of the individual budgets are drained.

Mayor Mach said that the 2011 budget total is \$4,249,422.00. As of October 31, 2011, we have spent \$3,562,652.00. At this rate, there should be about \$80,000.00 left at the end of the year. This amount could easily change with additional snow storms and the resulting overtime.

Mayor Mach spoke about the COAH trust monies that may or may not be confiscated by the State in July of 2012. The State is being ambiguous regarding the amount to be returned to the State and Mayor Mach is having difficulties getting an answer.

There was a discussion on the Recreation budget and funding. Ms. Emery said that the Recreation trust does not have enough money left to sustain the current level of programs and salary. The Committee was in agreement that this would be discussed in further detail in January of 2012.

Mr. Lance said that unless something dramatic happens, there will need to be a municipal tax in 2012. By the end of the year, this will be approximately \$350,000 in fund balance. There are still accounts from 2010 with monies which will lapse and come back to the current account in 2012. It is possible to keep just a portion of the unexpended budget in reserve at the end of 2011, cancel the remainder and anticipate it in 2012. This will bring more fund balance into play for the 2012 budget. Ms. Emery said that if this is done, it has to be done in December.

Mr. Lance asked about the debt service for 2012. Ms. Emery said that it will be about the same as this year.

Mrs. Emery asked what kind of decrease in budget requests the Committee is looking for from the department heads. Mr. Anderson said that the Committee has asked for 10% over the past couple of years, but thinks that 5% is a reasonable target for this year. The Committee was in agreement.

The possibility of putting out RFP's on computer services and banking was discussed.

Mr. Lance suggested looking into cost savings by combining the Planning and Zoning Boards into a Land Use Board. He made a motion to have Attorney Kevin Benbrook research the process of changing to a Land Use Board, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson.

Roll call vote:            AYE – Anderson, Lance, Mach  
                                 ABSTAIN – Lascari, Seal

Mr. Lance commented that every department has been cut back except for the Police Department. He asked if it would be worthwhile to contact the State Police to ascertain how much it would cost the township for the additional four (4) hours of coverage per day.

Mr. Seal was concerned with how the Department of Public Works would be expected to cut 5% from their budget when the price of materials is continuing to rise dramatically. Mr. Seal specifically objected to the way in which the roof on the Walnut Valley Fire House was handled. Mr. Lance and Mr. Anderson agreed that the bottom line is getting the best price for the taxpayers. Mr. Lance said that he will obtain a fourth quote to re-roof the fire house. Mr. Seal strongly objected to this and wanted a decision made using the existing three quotes. Mayor Mach said that he feels that an opportunity to save money may be available and the Committee should pursue it. Mr. Anderson and Mr. Lance agreed to pursue the fourth quote.

Mr. Lascari commented on the line item for the Walnut Valley field lights. He said that the lights are very inefficient and he feels they will need to be replaced soon, perhaps in increments. He also spoke about the telephone line item. He said that the market has changed and the Committee might want to look into the best competitive rate. He suggests getting the most internet access as possible and change to a voice over IP telephone system. However, an entire new phone system would be required.

Mr. Lance asked Mrs. Emery to prepare a resolution to cancel unexpended 2011 appropriations for the December meeting.

Mayor Mach asked Mr. Gara if he wanted to speak about the Police Department budget. Mr. Gara said that he would like to continue the vehicle lease program begun this year. He said that if another car were leased this year, the department would have at least two relatively new vehicles.

Mr. Seal asked if the Committee planned on appropriating the money this year for the purchase of a salt shed. Mr. Seal would also like to dispose of the fuel tanks behind the Stillwater Fire

House. We had a quote of \$11,000 for their removal, but this quote is already a year old. Mr. Seal said that there is a long list of items that need to be done at Givens Belet. Mayor Mach said that he has been requesting an approximate cost of the necessary repairs at Givens Belet. He is not looking for quotes, but a “best guess” from the DPW on these repairs.

#### **FROM THE PUBLIC**

Joseph DiGrazia and Scott Durlister of the Blirstown Ambulance Squad thanked the DPW workers for clearing the brush at the site for their new building. They would like permission to place a sign somewhere in front of the municipal building asking for donations towards financing their new building. Mr. DiGrazia submitted a rendering of the sign for the Committee’s consideration. He has spoken with the Zoning Official, who has approved the size of the sign. Mayor Mach is concerned about how the sign will look next to the existing sign.

Mr. Durlister also stated that the Ambulance Squad is planning a ground breaking on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

As there were no further comments from the public, Mr. Lance made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson, with all members in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 3:11 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC  
Municipal Clerk