

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
Wednesday, February 8, 2012, 6:45 PM**

MINUTES

Regular meeting begins at 7:30 pm or immediately following Closed Session, whichever comes last.

OPENING; ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Deputy Mayor Mach. Those present were Mr. Lance, Mr. Seal, Mr. Shoemaker and Deputy Mayor Mach. Also present were Township Attorney Robert Benbrook and Clerk Pizzaia. Mayor Anderson was absent.

FLAG SALUTE

The flag salute was conducted.

SUNSHINE STATEMENT

Deputy Mayor Mach read the following statement: Notice of this meeting has been sent to two newspapers of general circulation in which notice was given of the date, time, place and general agenda in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

CLOSED SESSION – Police/Step II Grievance – Officer Falcicchio; Possible Sale of Municipal Property

Mr. Shoemaker made a motion to enter into Closed Session, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

Roll call vote: AYE – Lance, Seal, Shoemaker, Mach
 ABSENT – Anderson

WHEREAS, the Blairstown Township Committee needs to discuss matters relating to the issues as listed above; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee believes it to be in the best interest of the public to discuss these matters in Closed Session;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of Blairstown, County of Warren, State of New Jersey that it shall meet in Closed Session to discuss only the subjects mentioned above, the results of which may be made public immediately thereafter or at a later date.

Dated: February 8, 2012

Attest:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC
Municipal Clerk

RESULTS OF CLOSED SESSION

Mr. Lance made a motion to come out of Closed Session, which was seconded by Mr. Shoemaker.

Roll call vote: AYE – Lance, Seal, Shoemaker, Mach
 ABSENT - Anderson

Deputy Mayor Mach stated that there was a discussion with Robert Canace of Ridge and Valley Land Conservancy and Joel McGreen of the Open Space Committee regarding the possible purchase of land. No action is being taken at this time.

A hearing was held on the Step II Grievance filed by Officer Nicholas Falccichio. Mr. Lance made a motion to deny the grievance, which was seconded by Mr. Shoemaker.

Roll call vote: AYE – Lance, Seal, Shoemaker, Mach
 ABSENT - Anderson

PUBLIC COMMENT – up to 5 speakers/3 minutes each

Patti Doell, Heller Hill Road, said that she is a member of the Garden Club. At their last meeting, they discussed putting flower pots on Main Street. She asked the Committee what was necessary to approve this request.

There was a question of whether the township would be claiming ownership and responsibility for the sidewalks if the Committee granted approval. After discussion, Attorney Benbrook said that in addition to Township Committee approval, each property owner/shop owner should be approached for written permission. Deputy Mayor Mach asked Ms. Doell to give the Committee a detailed description of what the pots would look like and what kind of plants would be in them.

MUNICIPAL HOUSING LIAISON – Affordable Housing Update

Theresa Tamburro, Municipal Housing Liaison, gave a summary of the township's affordable housing status, stating that to date, the township has in place two (2) accessory apartments of the 10 required and three (3) market to affordable units of the 10 required. In 2012-2013, the township should be working on finding group home providers. The last part of the plan is the municipally sponsored units, which the township will build and own. That requirement is 82 units, but this does not need to be researched until 2014-2015.

Since the abolition of COAH, new sets of rules are being established and will not be known for several months. Most municipalities, like Blairstown, are moving ahead very cautiously with their approved COAH plans until the new rules and goals are in place.

Our current plan calls for 23 units to be set aside for senior citizens. This has not been done yet. The township is now looking at the possibility of converting the Vail School into two (2) age restricted units.

Mrs. Tamburro said that at this point, she will be focusing on finding group home providers. She also will be working on our requirements to provide housing for the very low income, which could be in the form of rent assistance.

There was a discussion on the township's spending plan and it was the consensus that the State needs to realize that the previous plans imposed upon the municipalities, especially the rural ones, are unrealistic. Besides the financial aspects, our municipality does not have the infrastructure to support the required units.

Mrs. Tamburro said that as of today, there is \$225,549.00 in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. \$108,000 of that amount needs to be spent by July 12th of this year so it is not forfeited to the State.

Mr. Lance asked if the township could focus on the 23 age restricted units first, since it would not add to the school population. Mrs. Tamburro said that the township could do this.

Both Mrs. Tamburro and Deputy Mayor Mach emphasized that the township has done well with the affordable housing plan. However, the Roberts Bill has put time restrictions on spending, so the township is under this time restraint to spend down so that the trust fund is not in jeopardy.

Deputy Mayor Mach thanked Mrs. Tamburro for appearing tonight to give the Committee an update on the affordable housing situation.

MINUTES

January 11, 2012 – Regular Meeting and Closed Session Minutes

Mr. Seal made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Shoemaker.

Roll call vote: AYE – Lance, Seal, Shoemaker, Mach
 ABSENT – Anderson

ORDINANCE 2012 – 01 AN AMENDED ORDINANCE FIXING THE SALARIES AND WAGES OF THE EMPLOYEES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN IN THE COUNTY OF WARREN AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY BY SALARY RANGE – Second Reading, Final Adoption
Committee Discussion

Mr. Lance explained that this ordinance sets a salary range for the interlocal agreement with Knowlton Township for CFO services.

Deputy Mayor Mach opened the public hearing. As there were no comments or questions from the public, Deputy Mayor Mach closed the public hearing.

Mr. Shoemaker made a motion to approve Ordinance 2012-01 on second reading, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

Roll call vote: AYE – Lance, Seal, Shoemaker, Mach

ABSENT - Anderson

Public Comment on the Consent Agenda Items Only

There were no comments or questions from the public on the Consent Agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA INCLUDING RESOLUTIONS

- 1 – R.2012-029** Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2012-030** Authorization for the Transfer of Funds
- 3 – R.2012-031** Authorizing Blairstown Township to Provide Municipal Funding Share for Development Rights to Race Farm Owned by D. Race LLC
- 4 – R.2012-032** Appointment to Historic Preservation Committee
- 5 – R.2012-033** Salary of Department of Public Works Supervisor
- 6 – R.2012-034** Authorization to Make Application for a Wastewater Management Grant to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection
- 7 – Business Directional Sign Request** – Blair Academy, for sign to be located at Route 94 and Park Street intersection

Mr. Seal asked to have No. 5 removed from the Consent Agenda. Mr. Lance made a motion to approve No. 1-4 and No. 6 and No. 7. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shoemaker.

Roll call vote: AYE – Lance, Seal, Shoemaker, Mach
 ABSENT – Anderson

Mr. Seal questioned the directional sign request. He objected to the amount of signs that have been placed around the township illegally. He specifically objected to the signs around Blairstown advertising out-of-town events. He said that the type of sign being requested by Blair Academy for off-site signage is regulated, but he feels that the other signs are running rampant and it should be addressed.

As Mr. Seal wanted to pull Item #7 from the Consent Agenda and not Item #5, Deputy Mayor Mach asked for a withdrawal of the previous motion and second, which was agreed to. Deputy Mayor Mach asked for a new motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which was made by Mr. Lance and seconded by Mr. Seal.

Roll call vote: AYE – Lance, Seal, Shoemaker, Mach
 ABSENT – Anderson

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

- Clerk – January Report
- Finance – January Finance and Fuel Reports
- Police Department – January Report
- Tax Collector – January Report
- Municipal Court of North Warren – December Report
- Animal Control Officer – 3rd Quarter Report
- Warren County Health Department – January 6, 2012

A motion was made to accept the Department Reports by Mr. Shoemaker and was seconded by Deputy Mayor Mach. All members present voted in favor.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- 1 – Route 94 traffic concerns – T. Rodman to check light
The Committee agreed to have removed from the list.
- 2 – JCP&L billing – list submitted to JCP&L – waiting for response
Mr. Shoemaker checked on this and there has been no response to date.
- 3 – Service Electric Cable TV – letter sent to SECTV; SECTV is investigating extension of service
- 4 – Hazardous Obstructions at Blirstown Airport – waiting for map from State
- 5 – Review of Recreation Ordinance – Fair Share Reimbursement
Mr. Seal said that there has been a problem with fair share collections from other municipalities for some time. He feels that the only solution might be to collect from each out of town participant on an individual basis. Mr. Seal is working with Patricia Sagan, Recreation Director, on this matter.

COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE for information and possible action

- 1 – from Patricia Sagan, Recreation Director, regarding relocation of dug outs from Alpine and Sunoco fields to Sycamore Park

Deputy Mayor Mach asked if the removal included the cinder blocks. The owner of Alpine Meats has said that one of the dug outs encroaches on his property. Mr. Benbrook suggested that the owner be approached before any removal takes place. Mr. Seal will follow up on this. Otherwise, the Committee has no objections.

- 2 – from Jessica Griglak, Dept. of Environmental Protection, NJ Trout in the Classroom Program Coordinator, requesting Mayor's signature on fish stocking permit

This is a standard request. Mr. Lance made a motion to authorize the Mayor to sign the documents, which was seconded by Deputy Mayor Mach. All members present voted in favor.

- 3 – from Hope Township, regarding possible merger of the Belvidere Municipal Court and the Municipal Court of North Warren at Hope

Deputy Mayor Mach explained the merger of the Belvidere and North Warren Courts would be a huge savings for Blirstown. The merger has not been agreed to as of yet by the two courts.

- 4 – from James J. Williams, Director of Operations, Pollution Control Financing Authority of Warren County, re: Proposed Interlocal Agreement – Solid Waste Disposal

Deputy Mayor Mach explained that the only benefit to the agreement is a reduced tipping fee. Blirstown was advised several years ago not to enter into this agreement due to

possible litigation involvement, and he believes this advice still holds. The Committee was in agreement not to enter into this agreement.

5 – from Committeeman Mach, re: Blirstown Environmental Commission

Mayor Mach explained that there are two (2) communications from the Environmental Commission. The first is a draft editorial about the GenOn Plant that will go on the Sustainable Blirstown website. The second communication is regarding the construction of the Susquehanna Roseland power line project. Routes 3, 4, and 5 are still being considered by the National Parks Service.

Kevin Doell, Chair of the Environmental Commission came forward with Elena Lavrusin, a newly appointed member of the Commission. Mr. Doell gave a background on the GenOn Plant, stating that the court ruled for the State of New Jersey forcing the Pennsylvania plant to clean up, and that the GenOn plant is appealing the clean-up ruling. After discussion, the Committee approved of the distribution of this editorial.

With regard to the second communication, Mr. Doell said that the comments on the Susquehanna Roseland power line is an excerpt that has been previously distributed to the National Parks Service website during a comments period on this project.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE (See attached sheet)

There were no comments or questions from the public on the General Correspondence list.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY

Mr. Benbrook said that on January 5, 2012, Governor Christie signed legislation amending the statute that establishes an open space fund to include the financing of blue acres property. Blue acres properties are those which involve lands that have been affected by or are prone to storm damage or storm related flooding. To do this, however, the voters must approve it by way of a referendum question in the general or a special election.

After discussion, the Committee requested that Mr. Benbrook prepare a referendum question for the November ballot. Mr. Benbrook will prepare the referendum question and Clerk Pizzaia will check on any costs involved and deadlines for submission on the ballot.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK

The Clerk reported that Dr. Brian Fogelson, Superintendent of North Warren Regional High School, will be attending the March 14th meeting to discuss the school budget.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

COMMITTEEMAN LANCE

The auditors have completed a preliminary examination of the 2012 finances. With increased revenues, the cancelling of unexpended appropriations, and basic cutbacks, there was a fund balance of \$969,000 as of December 31, 2011. This will be instrumental in maintaining a zero municipal tax rate in 2012.

Standard and Poors has confirmed our AA- rating, which gives Blairstown the same rating as the State of New Jersey.

The next budget subcommittee meeting is scheduled for February 17th.

A salary range is now in place for the interlocal agreement with Knowlton Township for CFO services. Mr. Lance made a motion to authorize a yearly salary for this position at \$15,000. From the \$5,000 remainder, Blairstown will pay the CFO's social security contribution, pension contribution and dental coverage. After paying out the salary and other costs, there is a profit of \$1,391.00 for the township. Deputy Mayor Mach seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: AYE – Lance, Seal, Shoemaker, Mach
 ABSENT – Anderson

Mr. Lance reported that the Blairstown Elementary Board of Education voted to move the School Election to the November General Election.

With regard to the proposed Farm Direct Marketing Plan, Mr. Lance forwarded this to the Open Space Committee for comment. The Open Space Committee reported that they saw no problems with the plan.

The Historic Preservation Committee members have met twice already and are working on establishing general goals. They have begun sorting through the collection. They would like to have various exhibits in the caboose and make presentations to school children. Mr. Lance reported that they are a very enthusiastic group.

COMMITTEEMAN SEAL

With regard to the Water Department, there is a problem with a pipe that has broken twice within a month. The Department of Public Works Supervisor and the Licensed Water Operator think it is a pressure problem in a line inside the pump building. This is being worked on.

Mr. Seal will speak with the Recreation Director with regard to the dug outs at Alpine and Sunoco fields.

Mr. Seal said that an estimate on the repairs to Givens Belet has been received. The estimate appears to be quite low, at approximately \$67,000.

COMMITTEEMAN SHOEMAKER

Mr. Shoemaker reported that the blockage across a portion of Four Corners Road was taken care of shortly after the January meeting. Mr. Shoemaker rode with the DPW Supervisor to the site and the problem was taken care of.

Mr. Shoemaker will be preparing a press release regarding the alternate side of the street parking ordinance now in place. Mr. Seal suggested that that the press release also inform residents that the ordinance prohibits plowing snow into the roadway. Mr. Shoemaker said that he will add this.

The fire hose donated to Blirstown from South Hackensack has been picked up. There is 2,000 ft. of 4 in. hose and 800 ft. of 3 in. hose. Mr. Stoddart said that the hose appears to be in good condition. Mr. Shoemaker will draft a thank you letter to the Municipal Clerk of South Hackensack.

Mr. Shoemaker was given a tour of the Fire House on Stillwater Road by the Assistant Chief. The Assistant Chief explained the call-in system to Mr. Shoemaker, which works on DSL and is slow. Mr. Shoemaker will look into a cable hookup to speed up the system.

Mr. Shoemaker met with the DPW workers and got a tour of the township facilities, including the salt shed. He feels that the roof of the salt shed needs to be replaced. Mr. Seal said that the issue in his mind is that a portion of the salt shed is in the airport safety zone.

Mr. Shoemaker attended the NJ League of Municipalities Orientation for Newly Elected Officials. He found it to be very interesting. He found out that Lambertville used to have severe flooding problems which have been corrected. He thought it might be worthwhile to see what they did to alleviate the problem.

Mr. Shoemaker said that the slide area at Footbridge Park is a hazard for children because the wood chips are missing. He suggested roping off the area and discontinuing use of this section until chips can be replaced.

Mr. Shoemaker said that the water in the municipal building has been tested positive for bacteria. Mr. Stoddert has looked into solutions, and feels that raising the well head will help alleviate the problem. This will cost approximately \$800.00. Andover Pump suggested installing an ultraviolet light system to the well to help alleviate the bacteria problem. This would cost about \$3,500.00.

Mr. Shoemaker said that JCP&L will be checking our municipal building because of intermittent brownout problems.

COMMITTEEMAN MACH

Deputy Mayor Mach said that police contract negotiations are ongoing. There will be another meeting on February 20th.

He encouraged the public to sign up for Nixle, which allows people to receive immediate police notifications on their cell phones and their computers. There is no charge to the user.

Deputy Mayor Mach asked the Committee their feelings on having a townwide clean-up this year. It was the consensus to have a spring and fall clean-up scheduled this year.

FROM THE PUBLIC

Fred Cook, Four Corners Road, spoke about the school elections. The School Board voted to have the school election moved to the November general election.

Mr. Cook asked the Committee if they know how many vacant homes existed in Blirstown. No one knew the number, but Mr. Seal stated that the Tax Collector gave him a record on foreclosures, which numbered 73 as of October 11, 2011. There were nine (9) bankruptcy notices and 59 properties with tax sales initiated.

Robert Haberstadt, Blairstown Ambulance Corps, spoke about the system used by the Ambulance Corps called iamresponding.com. It records call-in times and the time responded. It is working out very well for the ambulance members and he suggested to Mr. Shoemaker that the Fire Department might want to look into it.

Kevin Doell, Heller Hill Road, asked about the water problem in the building. He was told that during the last quarterly test, the water tested positive for coliform.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no further comments from the public, Mr. Seal made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Lance. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC
Municipal Clerk