

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN  
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
Wednesday, March 14, 2012, 7:30 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 Mayor Anderson. Those present were Mr. Lance, Mr. Seal, Mr. Shoemaker, Mr. Mach and Mayor Anderson. Also present were Township Attorney Robert Benbrook and Clerk Pizzaia.

**FLAG SALUTE**

The flag salute was conducted.

**SUNSHINE STATEMENT**

Mayor Anderson 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.

**PUBLIC COMMENT – up to 5 speakers/3 minutes each**

Gladys Bellott, Union Brick Road, spoke about the condition of the yard at 83 Union Brick Road. She asked if any progress has been made in forcing the owner to clean it up. Mr. Benbrook said that the case has been turned over to the Warren County Health Department. Mayor Anderson read the report from the county health department, which stated that a court hearing was held. The judge ruled that the state proved their case beyond a reasonable doubt. The judge indicated that some small progress has been made and has given the homeowner an additional two months to clean the property. Mrs. Bellott is concerned because it is a health hazard in addition to being an eyesore to the neighborhood.

Jean O'Brien, East Avenue, asked for an update on the flooding situation in the village area. Mr. Mach said that Ted Rodman, Township Engineer, will be in attendance later this evening to discuss the Paulina Dam. He asked Mrs. O'Brien to wait to discuss this issue at that time. Mr. Mach also said that there is a map at the back of the room giving an aerial view of the Paulins Kill River from downtown Blairstown to the Delaware River.

Rebecca Seamon, Dog Park Committee, gave an update on the progress being made for the construction of a dog park. She said that approximately 25% of the funds have been raised and that they now are an official 5013C. The Dog Park Committee asked for permission to clear the land. She also wanted to know how much notice the Committee needed when the Dog Park Committee is ready to starting building. She said that it will probably take another two years before they have enough money. Mayor Anderson said that a six month notice will probably be sufficient.

There was a question on whether the township would give the Dog Park Committee a lease for the property. Mr. Benbrook recommended against a lease because the township would be relinquishing rights to the property. With regard to clearing the land, it was understood that the Dog Park Committee would have to do the clearing. They were directed to coordinate their activities through the Clerk.

Anita Ardia, Dry Road, wished to praise Mayor Anderson and Mr. Seal. She said that Mayor Anderson will be honoring the volunteer members of the various boards and committees. She said that she had worked with Mr. Seal many years ago on the Township Committee and that she admires him for being able to go against the majority. She said that both of these gentlemen have been an inspiration to her.

Mrs. Ardia questioned Mr. Lance about the \$969,000 surplus that he reported at last month's meeting. She asked Mr. Lance for a brief summary on where the surplus came from. Mr. Lance will provide Mrs. Ardia with a written summary.

#### **DR. BRIAN FOGELSON, SUPERINTENDENT, NORTH WARREN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – 2012/13 SCHOOL BUDGET**

Dr. Fogelson gave an overview of the 2012/2013 school budget. He introduced Christina Sharkey, School Business Administrator, and Eugene Woznicki, member of the Board of Education. Dr. Fogelson outlined academic achievements, which include two national merit finalists and 11 commended students. The school continues to do well in athletics and the arts. More than 50% of the student body is involved in the arts at NWRHS.

The budget goals for 2012-2013 include increasing academic achievement, maintaining existing program offerings, maintaining class size and increasing staffing for programmatic needs.

Other goals include seeking a “greener” footprint for the school and exploring more on-line options for students.

Capital projects in the budget include Phase 2 of the roof repair, window replacement, and Phase 2 of the security cameras.

Anticipated revenues for this coming school budget total \$16,252,132, which is \$538,272 less than last year's total revenues. Currently, the school has no debt service, but there is a \$29,958 decrease in State Aid.

Reductions have been made in various areas, which include a cut in the custodial line, retirements, reduced administrative supplies and instructional supplies. Athletic costs and special education costs have also been reduced.

The tax impact for Blairstown in this proposed budget is a 4 cent decrease, which equates to a \$24.66 annual decrease on the average assessed property of \$298,761, or a decrease of \$2.06 per month on the average assessed property.

Dr. Fogelson answered questions from the audience. Mayor Anderson thanked Dr. Fogelson for attending tonight's meeting to present the proposed 2012-13 budget to the Committee

and the residents in attendance. Dr. Fogelson's complete presentation is attached to the minutes.

## **MINUTES**

February 8, 2012 – Regular Meeting and Closed Session Minutes (Mayor Anderson was absent)

Mr. Seal made a motion to approve the regular and closed session minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

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

## **INTRODUCTION OF 2012 BUDGET**

**R.2012 – 036**            Delayed Introduction of 2012 Budget  
**R.2012 – 037**            Special Items of Revenue  
**R.2012 – 038**            Introduction of 2012 Budget

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve R.2012-036, R.2012-037 and R.2012-038. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mach.

Mr. Shoemaker questioned the Planning Board and Zoning Board budgets and noticed that it appears that the plan is to move towards a combined land use board. Mr. Shoemaker feels that there is value in having two boards because it gives the residents more opportunity to participate in the governance of the township. He also feels that the cost savings are minimal and it does not warrant the change at this time. Mr. Seal agreed with Mr. Shoemaker's reasoning, adding that two boards have a built in system of checks and balances. Mr. Lance responded that he worked under the direction to save wherever possible, regardless of the amount of savings. He said that a little savings in many places add up and contribute to the overall savings.

Mr. Benbrook said that he has more than 40 years of experience with land use issues and he feels that having one land use board makes for uniform decision making, which is a more fair system for the residents.

Mayor Anderson thanked the Committee, including former Committeeman Lascari, for the hard work in keeping the budget down during the past several years. He also thanked the employees for their cooperation.

Roll call vote:            AYE – Lance, Mach, Seal, Shoemaker, 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.2012-039**    Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2012-040**    Authorization to Refund 2012 Tax Overpayment, B803, L9.06
- 3 – R.2012-041**    Authorization to Cancel Lien of Property
- 4 – R.2012-042**    Authorization to Transfer Funds

**5 – R.2012-043 Award of Contract for Refuse Collection**

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which was seconded by Mr. Mach.

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

**Application for membership in Blairstown Hose Company No. 1 – Patrick Ceres**

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the application, which was seconded by Mr. Shoemaker.

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

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

- Clerk – February Report
- Finance – February Finance and Fuel Reports
- Police Department – February Report
- Tax Collector – January Report
- Animal Control Officer – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2011
- Municipal Court of North Warren – January Report
- Warren County Health Department – February 10, 2012

Mr. Shoemaker made a motion to accept the Department Reports, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

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

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- 1 – JCP&L billing – list submitted to JCP&L – waiting for response  
Mr. Shoemaker has been in contact with a representative from JCP&L, who would like information on the wattage of the lights to be turned off. JCP&L will be compiling this information.
- 2 – Service Electric Cable TV – letter sent to SECTV; SECTV is investigating extension of service  
Mr. Mach said the franchise is due for renewal in February 2013.
- 3 – Hazardous Obstructions at Blairstown Airport – waiting for map from State
- 4 – Review of Recreation Ordinance – Fair Share Reimbursement  
Mr. Seal said that since the municipalities are not paying, he feels the equitable way is for out-of-town residents to pay individually. There are ongoing conversations with the Recreation Director.

**COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE** for information and possible action

- 1 – from State Agriculture Development Committee, re: SADC Municipal Planning Incentive Grant Approval, C.J. Race Farm

This is for information only. No action is required.

2 – from Committeeman Mach, re: Paulina Dam Repairs and Rehabilitation

Mr. Mach asked Mr. Rodman to come forward to explain. There is a communication from the NJ State Historic Preservation Office stating that a Phase 1B Evaluation of the Paulina Dam is required. Mr. Rodman has received a proposal from McCabe & McCabe, LLC. to perform the Phase 1B Evaluation for \$7,300.00. This basically entails a search for artifacts, which would be cataloged and removed. This phase needs to be completed before the State mandated repairs to the dam are started.

Mr. Mach made a motion to accept the proposal from McCabe & McCabe for the Phase 1B Evaluation of the Paulina Dam at a cost of \$7,300.00. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lance. Mr. Lance said that since it is an historic dam, and since the purpose of the Phase 1B Evaluation is to find artifacts, he feels the cost of this proposal should be taken from the Open Space monies. Mr. Mach and Mr. Lance amended their motions to reflect that the funding for this proposal will be paid from the Open Space trust.

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

3 – from Leonard F. Brazaitis, regarding water run-off problem on Walnut Valley Road

Mayor Anderson explained that this is an ongoing problem at 81 Walnut Valley Road. Mr. Seal said that he has looked into this and it is a problem between 81 Walnut Valley Road and the neighboring house. It was suggested that a berm could be made to alleviate the problem, but the neighbor objected to how it would look. Mr. Seal feels that the only other solution would be to install a catch basin, but this would be expensive.

Mr. Shoemaker said that he visited the site with Carl Stoddart of the DPW and Mr. Stoddart suggested installing a pipe beginning at the slope of the neighbor's property down to a catch basin. Both Mr. Shoemaker and Mr. Seal agreed that this would be very expensive. Mr. Stoddart also suggested making a trench between the two properties.

Mayor Anderson requested that Mr. Shoemaker follow up on this and submit possible solutions to the Committee at a future meeting.

4 – from Bob Brandt, International Association of Lions Clubs, re: Tree Planting

Mr. Mach spoke with Mr. Brandt. The Lions Club would like to plant 50 trees, which will be between 2 to 3 feet high. Mr. Mach and Mr. Shoemaker will look at the municipal building property to decide where the trees should be planted. Mr. Mach asked the Committee for permission to purchase stakes for the trees. Mr. Shoemaker made a motion to approve the spending of up to \$50.00 for the purchase of stakes. Mr. Lance seconded the motion.

Vote: AYE – Lance, Mach, Seal, Shoemaker, Anderson

## **GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE (See attached sheet)**

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

## **FROM THE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY**

Mr. Benbrook had nothing to report.

## **FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK**

The town-wide cleanup weeks have been scheduled for April 26, 27, and 28 and September 27, 28 and 29. Flyers will go out in the April 11<sup>th</sup> edition of The Press and residents can begin to pick up their vouchers at the Municipal Building on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE**

### **COMMITTEEMAN LANCE**

The pension contribution figures for the Public Employees Retirement System will decrease by \$15,198.00. The township's contribution towards the Police and Fire Retirement System will be increased by \$6,400.00. There will be an approximate savings of \$8,800.00 next year.

The State Aid for Blairstown Elementary School increased by almost \$30,000.00 for the 2012/13 school year.

Members of the Historic Preservation Committee have been busy sorting through the collection. They have placed items in the display cabinet in the lobby.

### **COMMITTEEMAN MACH**

Mr. Mach and Mr. Rodman went to the Northern Regional Office of the Parks Service to follow up after Mrs. O'Brien's previous visit. Mr. Mach asked for and received the map of the Paulins Kill mentioned earlier in the meeting because it was thought that the flooding problem originated downstream. They have found out that the problem is not downstream. The river originates at Limecrest Quarry in Sparta. Mr. Mach told Mrs. O'Brien that it would be helpful if she could find out what happens to the water at this location.

Mr. Mach also found out that Swartswood Lake drains into the Paulins Kill upstream. Coming downstream, Paulins Kill Lake empties into the Paulins Kill River. This lake is privately owned. Mr. Mach suggested to Mrs. O'Brien that she could speak with the private homeowner association members to ascertain if they are in favor of assisting with the flooding situation.

Mr. Mach and Mr. Rodman went to a meeting in Washington Township attended by the Army Corps of Engineers along with a hydrologist, who explained the flood maps. There are some manmade obstructions to the flow of the river, such as the Lambert Road Bridge. All the information seems to point to the fact that the problem is upstream, not downstream. The Army Corps of Engineers is willing to come to a public meeting in Blairstown to discuss the flooding issue and to answer questions from the public.

There is another contract negotiation meeting for the police scheduled for April 26<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Mach said that a letter was sent to the Blirstown Elementary Board of Education regarding the purchase of Vail School. Mr. Mach and Theresa Tamburro, Municipal Housing Liaison, will attend the March 22<sup>nd</sup> Board of Education meeting to address this issue. Mrs. Tamburro will be sending letters to Blirstown homeowners to see if there is any interest in receiving funding for developing apartments or property for affordable housing. We are still up against the July 12<sup>th</sup> deadline for committing to spending down COAH funds.

Mr. Mach will be sending Mr. Benbrook all the information he can find on the energy tax. The state may have reduced our energy tax distribution at a level to trigger the "poison pill". He would like Mr. Benbrook to research this and to give the Committee his analysis.

The Environmental Commission is working on plans for the 2012 Earth Day River Run, scheduled for April 22<sup>nd</sup> from 12pm to 4pm at Footbridge Park. There will be a 5K trail run, kids' fun run, canoe rides, and Earth Day exhibits.

#### COMMITTEEMAN SEAL

Mr. Seal said that the township should be working towards making the improvements outlined in the 2006 Water Department Report submitted by Finelli Engineering. The State Inspector visited the Water Company recently and stated that he wants the second well operational. Mr. Seal said that the second well only produces 40 gallons per minute, but NJAC requires that the second well produce the same amount as the primary well. Mr. Seal said that he knows that money is tight and that the necessary upgrades are expensive, but the water department is in bad shape and some items need to be addressed.

He would like to have a call system in place to let the water users know when a problem exists. He has discussed this with Office of Emergency Management Director Jablon and Police Director Gara, who have told him this could be done. He would also like to have new water meters installed, preferably wireless ones, because many of the water users never return the usage cards. Mr. Seal would also like to research the possibility of hooking up a 12 inch pipe coming out of the top of the tank to tank trailers in emergencies so the water users would be able to get water.

Mr. Seal distributed a handout to the Committee detailing the needed repairs and upgrades. Mayor Anderson suggested that Mr. Seal prioritize these items.

After discussion, it was agreed that Mr. Seal would move ahead with getting a price for a pump for the second well and also look into making arrangements for a call system for the water users.

Mayor Anderson said that the Committee will revisit this next month when Mr. Seal gets prices and prioritizes the list of needed repairs.

#### COMMITTEEMAN SHOEMAKER

The water in the Municipal Building has tested clean again.

The salt shed roof needs to be repaired. Two quotations were received. One was from Belton Builders and the other from Richard Bush, General Contractor. The estimate is to replace rotted wood and to replace shingles. The lower quotation was from Richard Bush for \$10,100.00. Mr. Shoemaker made a motion to award the job to Richard Bush for a cost of \$10,100.00. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lance.

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

Mr. Shoemaker said that he spoke with Shawn Baldwin regarding his estimate to make repairs to the Givens Belet building. Mr. Baldwin's original estimate for the work was \$67,800.00. Mr. Shoemaker made some cost saving suggestions and the revised estimate is \$64,270.

Mr. Shoemaker said that the septic system is a separate issue. There was a discussion on whether the system needed to be repaired or replaced. Mr. Shoemaker said that the DPW Supervisor told him that a problem exists with the septic system. Mayor Anderson said that he does not want to put unnecessary money into the building if another building option is available. He had been speaking with the fire department members regarding the purchase of the fire hall on Mohican Road, but it seems that they want too much money for it. Mr. Lance agreed that he did not want to spend a great deal of money on the Givens Belet building and would be in favor of making an offer on the Mohican fire hall in a couple of months to see if they lower the price. Besides the condition of the building, there is concern about the size of the building and its poor location.

Mr. Mach said that he does not object to spending money on the building, but he would like the American Legion members to participate by recruiting individuals to donate their time to get the building in shape. Mr. Shoemaker said that he will talk to the American Legion members about lending their assistance.

Mayor Anderson asked about the possibility of using Open Space monies to make repairs to the Givens Belet building since it is primarily used for recreational purposes. Mr. Benbrook said that he believes that it would be a legitimate use, but he will review the deed to make sure there are no restrictions in this regard.

Mr. Shoemaker reported that the DPW employees did a good job in cleaning up Footbridge Park from the flooding.

There was a discussion on whether or not to remove the QP from the Paulina Dam. It was decided to leave it for the time being until repairs are made to the dam.

The Rotary Club donated the newly renovated signs at the Walnut Valley Field and on Route 94 near the intersection of Route 521. A letter will be sent to the club, thanking them for their donation.

Mr. Lance said that he would like to introduce an ordinance tonight to abolish the planning and zoning boards and to establish a land use board. He would like to do this tonight because if the budget is adopted on schedule next month, there will no funding appropriated for the individual boards. Mr. Lance made a motion to introduce Ordinance 2012 – 02 entitled, "An Ordinance Repealing Article 19-700 of the Code of the Township of Blirstown entitled 'Zoning Board of Adjustment and Planning Board' to Provide for a New Article 19-700 Entitled 'Land Use Board,' " by title only. The motion was seconded by Mayor Anderson.

Mayor Anderson said that he would like to try a land use board and if it does not work, the Committee can go back to the individual boards. He emphasized that this is no reflection on the hardworking and dedicated volunteers who sit on these boards, but is an attempt to save money wherever possible.

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

There was a discussion on the amount of alternates on the Land Use Board. Mr. Benbrook said that the introduced ordinance provides for two alternates, but the law allows up to four alternates. Mr. Benbrook was directed to amend the ordinance to provide for up to four alternate members of the Land Use Board.

#### **MAYOR ANDERSON**

Mayor Anderson said that it is a pleasure to work with the Senior Advisory Board. He said that he is pleased that Blairstown can once again present a budget with a zero municipal tax rate because he knows that many of the seniors depend on this.

Mayor Anderson feels that the other municipalities that use Blairstown Hose Company No. 1 should be making more of a contribution towards the expenses to run the company. Hardwick Township has been decreasing their contributions over the past three years. Mayor Anderson would like to meet with Mr. Benbrook and Mr. Mach for the purpose of drafting a letter to Hardwick, requesting that they pay an amount more in keeping with the coverage they receive from the municipality.

The DCA has approached Mayor Anderson to use Blairstown as a hub due to their plans to extend coverage in the area. Mayor Anderson submitted a letter to the DCA stating that this is acceptable, but Blairstown would like to revisit the arrangement after one year to discuss reimbursement for costs incurred for use of our building by the DCA to service other municipalities.

Ted Rodman, Township Engineer, said that he has received a proposal from Remington & Vernick Engineers to prepare a regional wastewater management plan for Blairstown Township, Hope Township and Hardwick Township, with Blairstown as the lead. The cost of this plan is not to exceed \$25,000.00 and will be paid for by grant monies. Mr. Benbrook is preparing an agreement between the three municipalities for this plan.

#### **FROM THE PUBLIC**

Beth Arena, High Street, asked about the Givens Belet building repairs and if the Committee felt that this was more important than the water department repairs. Mr. Lance answered that the monies come from two separate accounts and that one did not affect the other.

Mary Flynn, Conrad Court, said that she is opposed to abolishing the Planning and Zoning Boards and creating a single Land Use Board. She asked the Committee to reexamine the issue before adopting the ordinance.

Lorraine Meister, Briar Hill Lane, asked the Committee not to spend good money on the Givens Belet building. She said that the occupancy load is too small to serve as a Community Center.

Anita Ardia, Dry Road, said that she is impressed with the Environmental Commission's plans for the Earth Day Celebration.

She also said that she opposes the creation of a Land Use Board. She believes that the change does not warrant a \$7,000 per year savings.

Kevin Doell, Heller Hill Road, said that if possible, he would like the playground area at Footbridge Park reopened by the time the Earth Day Celebration takes place on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

As there were no further comments from the public, Mr. Shoemaker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Lance, with all members in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:12 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC  
Municipal Clerk