

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
Wednesday, July 10, 2013 7:30 PM**

M I N U T E S

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 Mach. Those present were Mr. Anderson, Mr. Avery, Mr. Lance, Mr. Shoemaker and Mayor Mach. Also present were Attorney Benbrook and Clerk Pizzaia.

FLAG SALUTE

The flag salute was conducted.

SUNSHINE STATEMENT

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.

PRESENTATION by Beth Styler Barry, Executive Director, Musconetcong Watershed Association, on Removal of Dams

Mayor Mach introduced Ms. Barry, who has a high familiarity with the procedure for dam removal. Ms. Barry began by explaining the reasons for dam removal, which include public safety, fish passage, and flood mitigation. During flood events, dams can worsen the problem upstream of the dam. The removal of dams will mitigate flooding upstream but not downstream.

Ms. Barry presented information on various dams that have been removed through the Musconetcong Watershed Association, such as in Finesville, Bloomsbury, and Hackettstown. The Finesville Dam is the one most similar to the Paulina Lake Dam in Blairstown. Ms. Barry showed slides on the steps taken in the removal of the Finesville Dam.

Ms. Barry said that she is often asked if dam removal will worsen the flooding conditions downstream of the dam. She said that the DEP requires proof that this will not happen before approval to remove a dam is granted. She said that a decision to remove a dam should be based on the physical characteristics of the dam. In the case of the Paulina Dam, its removal would have a positive impact on the ecosystem and reintroduce a flow pattern that would bring fish life back to its original state. It is also a public safety issue.

Ms. Barry opened the presentation to questions. Mr. Benbrook asked about the cost of removing the Finesville Dam. Ms. Barry said that it was approximately \$350,000, paid mostly through grant monies. In answer to the question about the effect of dam removal on wells in proximity to the dam, Ms. Barry said that in her experience, well water levels have not been affected.

Mr. Shoemaker asked how long it took to remove the Finesville Dam, from start to finish. Ms. Barry said that it took seven years because there were historic issues, but normally it would have been five years. Mayor Mach said that the Paulina Dam does have historical significance, but it is just a matter of time before it fails and it will be a safety factor.

Mr. Benbrook asked if the township is locked into the rehabilitation of the dam because of the grant monies awarded to the township for this purpose. After discussion, Ted Rodman, Township Engineer, said that he will contact the State to ask what our options are. Mr. Rodman will also contact Ms. Barry for the appropriate contact for sediment testing.

Mayor Mach thanked Ms. Barry for making this presentation. He said that the Committee will need to weigh its options and make a decision on whether to have the dam removed.

With regard to the road condition at Heller Hill Road, Mr. Rodman said that Laura Brill supplied him with all the deeds of the area to determine rights-of-way. He will be taking measurements and will make a recommendation to the Committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT – up to 5 speakers/3 minutes each

Rosalie Murray, Heller Hill Road, spoke about the rehabilitation of the Givens Belet building. She feels that the cost will be high and the end result will be a building that can accommodate only about 75 people. She also is not in favor of using the basement of the Mohican Fire Hall as a community center. She believes that a shared kitchen will become an issue. She is in favor of constructing a building on the Municipal Building property that will suit the needs of a greater array of our residents.

MINUTES

June 12, 2013 –Regular and Closed Session Meeting Minutes

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

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

CONSENT AGENDA INCLUDING RESOLUTIONS

- 1 – R.2013 – 082** Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2013 – 083** Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2013-002
- 3 – R.2013 – 084** Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2013-007
- 4 – Application for Business Directional Sign** – Blirstown Hose Company No. 1, at Route 94 and Mohican Road

Mr. Anderson asked to have item #4 removed from the Consent Agenda. Mr. Shoemaker made a motion to approve items #1-3, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

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

Mr. Anderson questioned item #4. Apparently, a business directional sign is being removed due to non-payment. Mr. Anderson wanted to know if the person in question was notified before the removal is made. Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the Mohican Banquet Hall sign, but not the removal of the Just-A-Mere Farm sign. The motion was seconded by Mr. Avery.

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

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Clerk – June Report
Finance – June Finance and Fuel Reports
Fire Department – May Report
Police Department – June Report
Tax Collector – June Report
Municipal Court of North Warren – May Report
Warren County Health Department – June 7, 2013

Mr. Avery made a motion to accept the Department Reports, which was seconded by Mr. Shoemaker, with all members voting in favor.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- 1 – Service Electric Cable TV –SECTV is preparing draft ordinance for franchise renewal
Mr. Benbrook is in receipt of correspondence from SECTV and will report on this at the next meeting.
- 2 – Review of Recreation Ordinance – Fair Share Reimbursement
No action taken.

COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE for information and possible action

- 1 – from Richard Myron, regarding school bus on Heller Hill Road and condition of roadway

Mr. Myron came forward to discuss his correspondence regarding the poor condition of Heller Hill Road. Mr. Myron is also concerned about the manner in which trees were removed from 4 Heller Hill Road. Mr. Shoemaker said that this is a new issue to him and he will go out during the week to look at this situation.

- 2 – Citizen Leadership Application from Dominic Daleo, for appointment to Land Use Board

Mayor Mach said that the Committee also received an application from Brian Walsh to become a member of the Land Use Board.

Mr. Lance made a motion to appoint Dominic Daleo as Alternate No. 1 of the Land Use Board and Brian Walsh as Alternate No. 2 of the Land Use Board. Mr. Shoemaker seconded the motion.

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

3 – EMEX – Custom Pricing Analysis for Blaiirstown Township

Mayor Mach explained that EMEX would like to make a proposal to the township to save money on energy costs. If we accept the proposal, it would be for a two year contract and the township could save approximately \$4,500.00 per year. A representative will be at the August meeting to explain the proposal.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE (See attached sheet)

There were no comments on the General Correspondence list.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY

The Township Attorney had nothing to report.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK

The Clerk had nothing to report.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

COMMITTEEMAN ANDERSON

With regard to public safety, Mr. Anderson reported that there was a plane crash on Gwinnup Road. Luckily, there were no injuries sustained and no damage to residences. Mr. Anderson thanked the police and first responders who assisted on the scene.

Mr. Anderson summarized the June Police Report. Mr. Anderson said that the Township Committee authorized Mayor Mach to sign to Memorandum of Agreement for the new police contract. The contract is now being reviewed by the labor attorney, the PBA attorney and Mr. Benbrook. Mr. Anderson made a motion to authorize Mayor Mach to sign the final contract, contingent upon the review and approval of Mr. Thibault, Labor Attorney and Mr. Benbrook. Mayor Mach seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Anderson said that when the Department of Community Affairs came into the building, it was agreed that the use of the space would be rent free for the first year. They have been in the building for three years now and Mr. Anderson said it is time that the DCA is charged rent for use of the room, electric, bathroom facilities, parking, copy machine usage, phone usage, etc. The space being used by the DCA is approximately 369 sq. ft. He would like the Committee to decide on a fair amount to ask the DCA to pay in exchange for the use of our building and all incidentals. Mr. Anderson would like to be able to give the DCA advance notice so that it can be budgeted for starting in 2014. After discussion, it was decided that Mr. Benbrook will speak with the DCA regarding this issue and get back to the Committee on his recommendations.

Mr. Anderson asked Robert Gara, Police Director, to explain the up-coming National Night Out. Mr. Gara said that National Night Out will be held on August 6th at the Municipal Building beginning at 4pm. This is an opportunity for the public to interact with the police officers. There will be identification finger printing for the children and refreshments will be served.

COMMITTEEMAN AVERY

Mr. Avery said that Tom Dust was recently appointed to the Environmental Commission. Mr. Avery would like the Environmental Commission to work on a mission statement, which would be approved by the Township Committee. Mayor Mach said that Mr. Avery should work closely with the ordinance regarding the Environmental Commission to assure that their mission statement does not conflict with township code.

The Recreation Department is very active with summer programs.

Mr. Avery was asked by the American Legion members to attend their last meeting to explain the plans to refurbish the Givens Belet building. The members are pleased and are willing to assist the township in making improvements to the building. Mr. Avery believes that there are many cosmetic improvements that can be accomplished by the legion members. Mayor Mach cautioned the Committee that the cost of the septic needs to be determined before going forward on other repairs.

Mr. Avery said that this year's July Fourth celebration was well attended and was a huge success.

Mr. Avery said that the new striping on Mohican Road makes it look like Cobblewood Road is a continuation of Mohican. This is a potentially dangerous situation.

COMMITTEEMAN LANCE

The 2013 tax rate is up to 2.168 per 100, which on a \$300,000 assessed house equates to an increase of \$24.00 per year.

Mr. Lance made a motion to appoint CFO Christine Rolef as insurance Fund Commissioner, replacing Barbara Emery, retired CFO. Mr. Shoemaker seconded the motion.

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

With regard to the Water Department, Mr. Lance reported that all of the water meters at Blair Academy have been replaced. Approximately 25% of the meters have been replaced to date.

The Historic Preservation Committee is continuing plans to convert Rotary Club tapes of recollections from the 1920's and 1930's into a digital format and then into a book.

COMMITTEEMAN SHOEMAKER

Mr. Shoemaker spoke about the BLAIRSTOWN sign completed by John Maxman to be placed at the front of the building. After discussion, the Committee decided to hang the sign from the overhang at the front entrance.

Mr. Shoemaker said that the Fire Department members are in receipt of the draft agreement for use of the bottom floor of the Mohican Road Fire Hall. It has been forwarded to their attorney for review.

Mr. Shoemaker, the Public Works Foreman and the Recreation Director met with a contractor at the Fire Hall to get a quote for the necessary repairs to the rental space. The kitchen issue was

discussed. It appears that a commercial stove is not needed. The purchase of an electric stove, a refrigerator and microwave should meet the needs of the township and the occasional use by the Hose Company.

Mr. Shoemaker said that when opening an overhead door at Walnut Valley Fire House, the top panel of the door fell down and damaged a visor of a fire apparatus. There is a repair estimate of \$4,000. The Committee had no objections to Mr. Shoemaker arranging for the repair.

The dog park had a formal opening which was well attended.

A fire drill was conducted on July 9th at Blair Academy. There were 10 companies in attendance, which included Blairstown Hose Company No. 1.

The Land Use Board is working on two applications, one for the Blair Academy dorms and the other for Advance Auto Parts.

In reference to the sign to be placed at the corner of Main Street and Route 94, Mr. Shoemaker said that the Zoning Officer informed him that a permit needs to be obtained. Mr. Benbrook said that he will speak to the Zoning Officer to see if the township under this particular circumstance is exempt from this regulation.

MAYOR MACH

With regard to COAH, the collection of development fees on commercial properties has been reinstated as of July 1st. That fee is 3.5% of the assessed value of the improvement.

The Warren County League of Municipalities is trying to reestablish itself. There have been two meetings and a third will be held in September.

Mayor Mach and Nick Mohr, EOM Coordinator, plan to go to the Warren County OEM Coordinator with a map of the watershed area. The purpose of the visit is to attempt to get timed releases from the two large dams upstream, the Paulina Lake Dam and Swartzwood Lake Dam.

FROM THE PUBLIC

Richard Keiling, Esq., representing the estate of Mary Kinney, spoke to the Committee regarding a piece of property situated in both Blairstown Township and Knowlton Township. In lieu of applying for a major subdivision, he is proposing subdividing the house with a remaining 11 acre parcel in Blairstown and a 26 acre parcel in Knowlton. In talking with Joel McGreen, Open Space Chair and Renee Mathez, Knowlton Committeeman, Mr. Keiling is proposing a joint project to have the property purchased through Open Space funds.

After discussion, the Committee advised Mr. Keiling that this project has already been proposed by Mr. McGreen. The amount proposed to the Township per acre is too high. Mr. Keiling will contact Mr. Benbrook regarding an offer from the sellers.

Richard Myron, Cobblewood Road, spoke about the deterioration of Cobblewood Road and the condition of the guiderails. Mr. Myron asked if applications have been submitted to FEMA for monies to make improvements. Mayor Mach informed Mr. Myron that the township did not

qualify for FEMA monies for repairs due to the past storms. Mayor Mach also stated that we have a five year plan in place and it will be followed.

Rosalie Murray, Heller Hill Road, asked who owns the stone wall on Heller Hill Road. Mr. Lance said it is probably in the township's right-of-way. Ms. Murray said that a tree has fallen and broke a section of the wall. Mr. Shoemaker said that the township is reviewing the situation and will try to alleviate the problem.

Mary Flynn, Conrad Court, asked about the meeting in September of the Warren County League of Municipalities. Mayor Mach informed her that this meeting is open to mayors only and not the general public.

Robert Halberstadt, Blirstown Ambulance Corps, said that he has posted photographs from the Fourth of July celebration and the Blair Academy drill on Facebook.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no further comments from the public, Mr. Shoemaker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Avery, with all members voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC
Municipal Clerk